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Peer Interaction in the Acquisition of Knowledge of Print of Kindergarten Children

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in the Acquisition of Knowledge

of Print

# of Kindergarten Children

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Committee

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Abstract

This study explores and describes the relationships of peers as literacy informers in emergent writers' acquisition of knowledge about print. It analyzes how peer interactions impact the acquisition of the following two print concepts:

1) Writers associate letters with their corresponding sounds.

2) Writing is meaningful, functional, and represents oral language.

Three female kindergartners from a midwestern, urban school, each with a different level of writing ability, were observed to determine the relationship peers had on their print development. The findings suggest that peers do actively influence knowledge acquisition about print when given the opportunity. Results indicate that peers are an important asset that should be utilized in a classroom where children are acquiring knowledge about print.

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Chapter I

The Problem

Introduction

There is a great amount of attention being focused on children's literacy learning. Children develop their literacy most effectively when teaching is meaningful, functional and developmentally appropriate (Morrow, 1993). This teaching occurs in homes, schools and other environments that nurture literacy development. In a literacy supported environment, there are many different components that affect literacy learning. These components include a print rich environment where literacy is modeled, literacy activities that occur in meaningful contexts, and role models and teachers that are comprised of parents, educators and peers. These components can influence emergent readers and writers and direct their literacy learning (Morrow, 1993).

One goal that educators strive for with young children is to interact with and successfully teach children to develop their writing skills. An educator must try to provide students with all possible resources to ensure successful learning of writing. One readily available resource for teachers to utilize is peers. This study explores and describes the impact peers have on emergent writers' acquisition of knowledge about print.

Background/Significance

When and how children acquire knowledge about print is not a new issue in education. It is, however, an issue that has become more relevant given the concerns of literacy that are plaguing our society. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (1994), reading proficiency among our children has shown minimal growth over the last twenty years. Writing proficiency has also shown a minimal amount of development since 1984. As a result of those findings, teachers and

parents are looking at when and how reading and writing instruction should be taught to address these issues.

In the United States' history of literacy, "English" instruction emerged in school curricula during the nineteenth century and focused on grammar and content usage (Applebee, 1974). Writing instruction was a product of students learning the rules of English language and their application. Reading was thus a prerequisite for writing since students were required to develop their grammar and usage skills. The writing that did occur continued to be prescriptive in nature (Andrews, 1993). During the 1920's, psychologists started to examine child development through maturation levels and mental age (Durkin, 1993). The views of Hall (1904) and Gesell (1925) during the 1920's provided society with the information that children matured in stages over time. Also during the 1920's, testing administered by psychologists provided evidence that children were experiencing difficulties with their literacy learning. One solution to these literacy problems were readiness workbooks and readiness textbooks. However, these provided children with drill and practice over concepts that did not always develop reading or writing abilities (Durkin, 1993).

During the time that readiness workbooks and texts were utilized, other theories were pursued by researchers. The wholeness of learning, as described by Dewey (1966), explained the relationship between school and life. Dewey described language as a teaching instrument in which real experiences were developed and learned. Piaget (1952), another psychologist, described the stages of cognitive development and emphasized the idea that children perform specific types of intellectual activities at each cognitive stage. Piaget and Inhelder (1969), emphasized that children are active participants in their learning through their interaction with the world.

Vygotsky's theory of intellectual development also had an impact on literacy development and active participation in learning. Vygotsky (1981) believed that children

incorporate into their existing knowledge ideas and behaviors acquired through their social interactions with supportive adults and peers.

Clay (1966) discussed emergent reading for the first time in 1966. During the 1970's, it was discovered that children's writing attempts implied that children understood that spoken words were made up of sounds that could be recorded in print (Durkin, 1993). Thus, the theory of emergent literacy was developed and started to change our beliefs regarding how young children learn to read and write . Further research by Strickland and Morrow (1989) emphasized the need for children to learn about reading and writing while they read and write in authentic contexts. Children need to interact with reading and writing by seeing, listening to, and discussing their literacy attempts.

How, then, can teachers meet children's emerging literacy needs? When children enter school they bring with them literacy concepts and competencies in reading, writing, and oral language (Morrow, 1993). Children need to continue their literacy development when they arrive at school, and they arrive at school with a diverse array of abilities. Teachers need to look for methods and resources that are available to utilize in their literacy instruction. Teachers must also ensure that their literacy instruction is pertinent to the learners' life experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). Emphasis should not focus on teaching, but should focus on learning. Lastly, literacy instruction should incorporate activities that meet the learner's need for social relationships with both adults and peers (Morrow, 1993; Vygotsky, 1981).

Purpose of the Study

I have developed three case studies that focus on three kindergarten children's literacy development in a low-socioeconomic urban school in eastern Nebraska. The children involved in my study represent one of three different writing abilities found in the kindergarten classroom: high, middle, and low. The purpose of my study is to explore the relationships of peers as literacy informers in emergent writers' acquisition of

knowledge about print. It analyzes how peer interactions impact the acquisition of the following two print concepts: 1) Writers associate letters with their corresponding sounds, and 2) Writing is meaningful, functional, and represents oral language.

The children involved in this study will write entries in their journals while using their peers as a resource to aid them in their writing. The children will share their journal entries with the class through author's chair. The impact that peers have on the acquisition of knowledge about print was determined by recording and examining student interactions during journal writing and author's chair to find out whether peers actually assist the participants with their writing and knowledge about print concepts.

Operational Definitions of Terms

The following terms are defined for the purpose of this study.

1. Emergent Writers are students who are beginning to experiment with print through writing. Emergent writers write "... marks on paper that have meaning for the child. That could include drawings, squiggles, lines, mock letters (made up letters), random letters, or anything the child puts on paper that makes sense to her" (Routman, 1991, p.216).

2. Peers are a source of support available to students in a classroom. Peers are same age students who can share ideas, give feedback, make suggestions for changes, and generally assist their classmates with their learning.

3. Peer Interaction occurs when students cooperatively work together sharing their strengths and expertise. These interactions consist of providing demonstrations for each other, talking together, and reacting to each other's work.

4. Knowledge about the Conventions of Print refers to the accepted procedures used for writing language. These procedures are not learned in a prescribed order, but are learned gradually through interactions with and connections between spoken and written words.

5. Journal Writing is writing used to develop personal thoughts and feelings that are significant to the writer. Harste and Burke (1988) explain that "... journals allow students to explore writing for personal growth and reflection " (p. 280). The major goal of journal writing is writing for meaning.

6. Author's Chair provides students with the opportunity to share aloud a piece of writing from a special place in the classroom used for "authors." Audience members are actively involved by listening and sharing their ideas and questions regarding the text. The focus of author's chair is sharing writing and receiving constructive feedback (Graves & Hansen, 1983).

7. Print Conventions Examined in this Study are as follows:

a. Writers associate letters with their corresponding sounds (Morrow, (1993).

b. Writing is meaningful, functional, and represents oral language (Morrow, 1993).

Chapter II

Review of Related Literature

Overview of Chapter

The purpose of the review of literature is to provide a framework in which to explore and describe the relationships of peers as literacy informers in emergent writers' acquisition of knowledge about print . To give direction to this study, five areas were examined: 1) Theoretical Context of the Study, 2) Acquisition of Knowledge about Print, 3) Peer Interaction, 4) Journal Writing, and 5) Author's Chair.

Theoretical Context of the Study

From childhood on, human beings are extraordinarily social (Bruner, 1986). Human beings learn through social processes, or meaningful communications with others. Language learning is a process that is social. It is through interactions with others that children "... construct the language system, i.e. the meanings and functions of language and the symbols to represent them in oral and written form" (Yaggar, 1985, p.3).

Considering that language learning is a socially constructed learning, one must address the theoretical nature of social interaction. Vygotsky's theory of development stresses the functions of social interaction in learning.

Vygotsky believed that children could learn skills beyond the level of their functioning (1978). This learning is Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" which emphasizes the utilization of peer interaction and adult interaction. This interaction moves children to their potential level of development. Vygotsky describes the zone as the area where the functions are "not yet matured" (p. 86) but are in the process of maturing. The maturation takes place through interactions with others who have similar or higher, extensive knowledge. This interaction allows children to use their expertise to assist others while they develop their own skills and abilities. One child may know the

meaning of a word while another child may add information which will help in the understanding and creating of text (Daiute & Dalton, 1992). This is an example of Vygotsky's anticipated mental development which occurs through social interactions.

Children operate and function in social settings. In these social settings, children, when actively involved in their learning, can serve as both teacher and student. They can offer and receive support and assistance from their peers. They can progress together through their zones of proximal development. They can "scaffold" for each other --a term first used by Bruner (1975), referring to the support and modeling that peers and adults can offer each other. This support and modeling allows children to demonstrate and extend their knowledge about a concept (Morrow, 1993). Through this social interaction, cognitive and social growth can occur in a classroom. Merritt and Dyson (1991) emphasize this point when they state, "the social life of a classroom provides an important window through which to view academic development ..." (p. 4).

Classrooms are collective settings where academic processes are derived from social and communicative processes. Bloome and Theodorou (1988) identified three different social groups in a classroom. One of these social groups consists of a teacher - class group, where the class is acted upon by the teacher. Second, there is the teacher - student group, where a single student interacts with the teacher. Lastly, there is the peer - peer group, where students interact with each other. These three groups form a classroom community. In a classroom community with active engagement, learning can occur.

This description of a classroom is based on a sociolinguistic perspective which views the classroom as " ... a social system in which instruction and learning are products of interactions among participants (students, teachers, materials)" (Green, Harker, & Golden, 1987, p. 51). Knowledge construction and transmission under this perspective recognizes all participants as both teachers and learners. Children build their knowledge through interactions and facilitation offered by peers and teachers (Vygotsky, 1978).

The significance of peer interaction, Vygotsky's "social environment" (1978), and a sociolinguistic perspective of learning provides a framework for viewing the social learning that can occur in a classroom. Vygotsky states that learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers" (p. 90). This perspective will direct the study.

Acquisition of Knowledge about Print

"Children are surrounded by print" (Haussler, 1985, p. 73). They encounter print daily in their surroundings whether at home or out in their neighborhoods. Children acquire experience and knowledge about print through meaningful and practical experiences (Morrow, 1993). These experiences occur in their everyday surroundings. The surroundings include the home environment, the educational environment, and the community (Strickland & Morrow, 1989). These experiences or occurrences, when functional, can provide optimum learning encounters for emergent readers and writers.

Cambourne (1988) elaborates on optimum learning encounters when he defines conditions that are conducive to learning. These conditions include "... immersion, demonstration, engagement, expectation, responsibility, approximation, use, and response" (p. 13). He states that these conditions can also be applied to literacy learning so an extension of learning can occur. This extension of learning can occur in any nurturing environment, with any age child, and helps to set the foundation for literacy learning.

Literacy learning experiences begin at birth when a child encounters spoken language, and they continue throughout the child's life (DeCasper & Spence, 1986). Children start by babbling, scribbling, and pretend reading. Eventually their ideas are expressed through words, both verbally and in written form. When children experiment with their own print through reading and writing, they are uncovering what literacy is

about. They are discovering print, and they are becoming literate (Clay, 1991; Goodman, 1986; Morrow, 1993).

Experimentation with print is only the beginning of literacy learning. Objectives and skills concerning the development of literacy knowledge about print concepts needs to be incorporated in daily activities (Morrow, 1993). These concepts, in the past, were mainly taught at school through worksheets that were not always relevant to the child. Current research has redirected this instruction so that it is functional and meaningful for the child. "Children need to be socially interactive when they are learning about print; they need models to emulate; and the learning must be through experiences that are meaningful and connected with real life and incorporate what children already know" (Morrow, 1993, p. 201).

Children enter school with a variety of literacy skills and experiences. "To a greater or lesser degree, depending upon the home, children acquire knowledge before coming to school that lays the foundation for reading" (Heath, 1983, p. 21). When parents read magazines, books, and newspapers, for example, they are modeling the importance of reading to their children. They are also demonstrating a function of print. Print conveys meaning. This is an important concept of print that must be internalized in children (Clay, 1991). When children realize this function of print, they develop a new form of communication which is an important part of literacy. Haussler (1985) found that "it is the need to communicate with others and to make sense of printed language which motivates young children to begin reading" (p. 74).

Children are curious about text. This curiosity can be a compelling force that directs children towards literacy (Chapman, 1986). Parents can easily take advantage of this curiosity. They can provide children with ample opportunities for exposure to print by reading to children or providing materials so that children can create their own text to read back. This will help to create a home environment that is rich in print and beneficial to the child. It will also support children in their exploration of print. This

support by parents is "... of inestimable importance in laying the foundation for learning to read" (Anderson et al, 1985, p. 27). These literacy experiences can later assist with the transition to school. Children will have an advantage if they have a rich repertoire of experiences to bring to school and use in both their writing and reading.

According to Mason (1984), children enter school with very different levels of knowledge about printed language, and instruction needs to be adjusted for these differences. Elementary schools should not be set up as institutions that demand basic skills, but should be set up so that children can control their written language and their creativity. This will allow the teacher to attend to the individual needs of each child. The teacher needs to interact with each child and assist in the child's development by offering support and "developmentally appropriate" instruction that will not stress or pressure the child. "Developmentally appropriate" instruction includes activities that are both age appropriate and individually appropriate for each child. Children invent forms of print through observations, models, and interactions with more literate individuals. Teachers facilitate this learning (Bredekamp, 1987; Morrow, 1993; Sulzby, Teale, & Kamberelis, 1989).

The teacher's role is very important in emergent literacy. The teacher is a role model, and an instructor who moves children forward in developmentally appropriate ways. A teacher teaches by what he or she sees and says. Teachers are nurturers of growth (Bissex,1885).

A teacher can nurture growth after he/she assesses each child, finding out his/her strong and weak areas. The teacher works at developing these areas so that the children can become independent writers and readers. The teacher helps children by providing meaningful opportunities for children to work with print and writing and then assists children, or sets up an interactive environment so that they can assist each other in their learning. "Children learn about writing by observing more skilled others and by participating with them in literacy events" (Morrow, 1993, p. 236). After observations

and interactions, children need opportunities to explore the literacy experiences that they have had with others in order to develop their own writing. Through their own exploration, "... children produce inventions, trials, approximations, and errors, and these provide important signals of the progressions in learning that they are making" (Clay, 1991, p. 112). These signals then direct the teacher to the next stages of development for his or her students.

Children are responsible for nurturing their growth also. "Though they themselves may contribute only minor skills at first, they are surrounded by the end products they are striving to achieve and they witness accomplished performances all around them" (Forester, 1986, p. 66-67). McInnes (1986) found that "children in active school settings do not simply receive knowledge about language, they remake it for themselves" (p. 73). Children explore, interact with, and generalize behaviors that they have encountered in order to make sense of these behaviors. Therefore, children need active roles in the classroom and at home.

According to constructivist research (Piaget, 1952), children develop their understanding of the world and their intelligence by actively constructing and interpreting personal experiences throughout their lives. Through this individual interaction, children reflect on and modify their own thinking. Learners ask questions, experiment with their environment, and think about justification of their understanding.

Vygotsky (1978) emphasizes the use of language as a tool in the development of learning and thinking. Children actively experiment with and use language to communicate. All children use the natural processes of communication. They communicate through oral language, music, drama, songs, drawings, and writing. All of these areas can enhance literacy development (Forester, 1986; Tovey & Kerber, 1986).

Children also learn by doing. According to McInnes (1986), "... children invest a large amount of time, ingenuity, and energy inventing language learning strategies for themselves" (p. 73). Children need both engagement in learning and inventiveness in

exploring and extending their literacy learning. This type of interaction is beneficial for children because it is meaningful and fun. When an activity is fun, children usually repeat the activity, which then provides voluntary practice of that skill or behavior (Forester, 1986).

When children experiment with their environment, they take past experiences and apply that information to the new situation and try to solve their new problems. This process occurs with language construction, emergent reading, and emergent writing. When children are involved in a literacy activity, they can make predictions, confirm or reject their predictions, then construct meaning from their previous knowledge (McInnes, 1986). When applied to writing, children make marks on their paper, read the marks, and then they rewrite and correct their writing. These activities display the emergent stages of literacy (DeFord, 1986).

Sulzby (1985) describes six categories of kindergarten children's emerging writing. They are as follows:

1. Children writing by drawing.
2. Children writing by scribbling.
3. Children writing by making letter-like forms.
4. Children writing by reproducing strings of letters.
5. Children writing by inventing their spelling.
6. Children writing by spelling conventionally.

These categories are descriptions only of children's early writing. As children develop their writing abilities, they move in and out of the writing categories (Morrow, 1993).

Children need an active role in their literacy quest. Children, when actively involved in their own literacy, can help to construct their knowledge about literacy and other students' knowledge about literacy. Parents and educators need to capitalize on this idea and use children as a source of knowledge and a learning strategy.

The acquisition of literacy is a vital learning process, essential for survival in our world. Together parents, teachers, and children are obliged to work together so that all children become literate.

Peer Interaction

"Peers, it is often said, need to be 'trained,' but are more likely to be helpful, partly because they are peers, and partly because there are more of them ..." (Hunt, 1987, p. 229). Peers are a resource readily available in a classroom, and have been utilized in this country and other countries abroad under different circumstances. They have been used as peer response groups, tutors, collaborators, members of small groups, in cooperative learning situations, and as a source of feedback (Moffett, 1968; Wagner, 1982).

Peer interaction involves a community of learners working together to accomplish goals and further individual learning. Interaction can occur in a classroom where there is freedom to interact and respond spontaneously. Virtually all children can benefit from an interactive environment where children can share their expertise with their peers. "The advantage is that it is often easier to accept help from someone on your level" (Tucker, 1990, p. 4). This in turn will allow the teacher to perform more individualized teaching for those children needing it. Another advantage is that all children can contribute and therefore build one another's confidence and social skills. Peer interaction can also provide immediate feedback that is varied from the teacher's point of view. Peers can observe the learner's behaviors and outcomes and can call attention to ideas and perspectives that the learner cannot see. The benefits achieved from peer interaction provide teachers and researchers with an inspiring perspective on both social and academic learning (Argyle, 1976; Moffett, 1968).

Previous studies on the interactional nature of written language have discovered that children orally share their thoughts and ideas while writing together. "When children talk during writing, they can explore all facets of the writing process and

become more familiar with them, and when faced with a problem during writing, the writer can use all of their combined talents to solve it" (Tucker, 1990, p. 7). In a study examining the verbal comments of writing groups, Gere (1982) found that " ... students often use talk to explore and enlarge their understanding of both the content of their writing and of group and writing processes" (p. 24). This can include elaborating and clarifying ideas and points, writing for meaning, audience awareness and developing form. Sanacore (1987) reinforced this idea when he emphasized that peer interaction provides students with " ... opportunities to observe how words affect others" (p. 1). It is this interaction of language that fosters better communication which can then be extended to written language.

Mavrogenes (1986) found that the process of learning to write and learning to talk share similar characteristics. The Commission of Reading (Anderson, et al, 1985) strengthens the connection between writing, talking and the other language arts when it states "all of the uses of language -- listening, speaking, reading, and writing -- are interrelated and mutually supported. It follows, therefore, that school activities that foster one of the language arts will benefit the others as well" (p. 79). Peer interaction during writing fosters the integration of the language arts. Rowe (1987) found as a result of her experiences in a preschool classroom that "children were able to learn about writing and drawing, in part, because they were able to explore their ideas verbally" (p. 39). In this study, children were integrating the language arts. Children learned through interactive literacy demonstrations. These demonstrations consisted of observations, discussions and then incorporation of new information in their own writing. It is this interaction that can positively influence children's writing.

Also influencing children's writing are the interactions of an audience. Moffett (1968) describes classmates as a natural audience. He states that "young people are most interested in writing for their peers" (p. 193). Collins (1983) found that " children learn to write by writing and by adjusting their perceptions of their writing with the aid of an

audience's responses" (p. 7). The audience's interaction provides the writer with three valuable insights regarding their writing. First, the writer's efforts are confirmed; second, the interaction extends the author's own understanding of his or her writing; and third, there is positive support that the writers and audience share as they struggle and succeed together. These responses allow children to become aware of each other's struggles, work together and support each other in their problems. They then apply these practices in future learning situations including their own writing (Church, 1985).

Estrabrook's (1982) study found that children develop their own writing by first being an audience to writers. She describes how they listen to writers, then they gradually ask questions about the writing, and finally, they interact with their peers and practice what they have learned. It is this exploration, discussion, and interaction that assists children in their writing. Gere (1982) reinforces this idea when she states " ... when students give one another advice about writing, they do so in the belief that what they say can affect change" (p. 7). This can be done through peer interaction.

Further interactive research by Sheaffer (1988) studied kindergartners participating in a creative writing program focusing on interactions and conferences. Sheaffer discovered that children working with their peers attained higher scores in oral language than the nonparticipants of the study. Daiute and Dalton (1992), also studying peer collaboration, observed that children composing together transfer knowledge among each other. The information shared, when real and pertinent, teaches others about the effects of their work. Graves (1983) reinforces the concept of interaction when he states "children do have things to teach us, both about their subjects and how they write about them" (p. 99). These studies reinforce even further the positive impact peers have on language learning.

Teachers should capitalize on the resource readily available in their classrooms: peers. Peers, at every age level, are valuable teachers of literacy. "We know from current research that talking with peers provides writers with a sounding board for their

ideas, helps them discover what they have to say and write, offers alternatives for thinking, and teaches them the benefits of compromise" (Montgomery, 1992, p. 2). The value of an experience such as this in an interactive classroom is immeasurable. This interaction can help children find and establish their roles as writers. It can also teach children to teach each other in an environment where feedback is welcomed (Moffett, 1968).

Journal Writing

Journal writing is an essential tool that allows a writer to explore one's own life experiences, thinking processes and creativity, and language development both orally and graphically. This tool is a powerful link that connects significant life events with school. Each child is validated through the home-school link of journal writing. Journals invite children to write, share, and celebrate their personal experiences. They allow learners to explore their existence and how they influence others (Cothern, 1991; Fulwiler, 1987).

Journals have also been called chronicles, commonplace books, scrapbooks, or diaries. They date back to ancient times and reflect both the historical and literal importance of writing (Autrey, 1987).

Within the educational environment, journals have become a limitless instructional tool. Journals enable writers "... to collect ideas and information, thereby giving writers the opportunity to rediscover what is already known" (Cothern, 1991, p. 5). They allow students to think, organize and construct meaning in a natural way. Journal writing also promotes thinking skills such as observing, comparing, interpreting, imagining and decision making. They can be utilized in many ways to meet academic needs (Bruner, 1988; Raths, 1987; Zacharias, 1990).

Journal writing provides many benefits for students. It promotes fluency in both reading and writing, encourages exploration and taking risks, provides records of writing and development of written language conventions, and encourages reflection. "The use

of personal journals for the teaching of writing is far more powerful and far-reading than is generally recognized" (Fulwiler, 1987, p. 28). Since educators encourage children to write and explore print, what more natural writing opportunity is there than to write in journals? Children are encouraged to write about personal, relevant topics, grammar and structure are not emphasized, interaction can occur among the writers, and journals improve writing and composing. Journals are appropriate in a kindergarten classroom and can continue to be used throughout one's life as a writing outlet (Hipple, 1985).

Journals provide educators and students with an individually appropriate writing experience. It is imperative that all children learn to compose so that they can function in a literate society. Journal writing can help develop this critical literacy skill called writing.

Author's Chair

Sharing writing with an audience emphasizes the communicative nature of writing. Lamme (1989) explains that "this use of audience during the writing process helps children refine their creativity and skills as authors naturally" (p. 705). This natural process allows children in the class to be both students and teachers. Accordingly, Hunt (1987) emphasizes the importance of writers developing audience awareness by having other people assist writers by submitting comments to the writer about his or her writing. This in turn directs the writing and creates a greater purpose for writing. Children develop their writing by participating in the roles of both audience and writer. Writers need to write and they also need their writing to be heard (Calkins, 1986; Morrow, 1993). This can be achieved through the author's chair.

The author's chair is often a permanent reading/writing chair that is utilized by anyone who is an author. The author sits in the author's chair, shares his or her work, and then asks the audience for questions and input. The author's chair is important because peers give authors feedback with regard to their writing. It also provides content and

conferencing models and helps to develop a community of writers (Graves & Hansen, 1983).

The sharing that takes place from the author's chair can then be incorporated into students' own writing, both the author's writing and the audience's future writing. An advantage of author's chair is that an author can receive many ideas and opinions from peers as opposed to comments from only one person. This can benefit the writer and his or her peers (Lamme, 1989).

Graves and Hansen (1983) describe a first grade classroom in which the students become authors by writing and sharing their writing. The children develop the author concept by progressing through three phases: the Replication Phase, the Transition Phase, and the Sense of Option Phase. These phases help to provide the foundation for authorship.

The Replication Phase consists of writers experimenting with what writers and readers do. They attempt to put their ideas and thoughts on paper and then they talk about them with their peers. Upon completion of the initial writing and sharing, writers then move into the Transition Phase.

The Transition Phase occurs when the writer sees himself or herself as an author. The focus is on rereading for meaning and utilizing print instead of illustrations. When this phase is completed, it is followed by the Sense of Option Phase.

The Sense of Option Phase is a phase in which authors make decisions about the content of their writing. They defend and ask questions about their writing, and they anticipate questions from the audience. In this phase the writer becomes an assertive writer and an assertive audience member (Graves & Hansen, 1983).

These phases all require sharing of writing. The sharing of writing that takes place changes a writing classroom into a learning classroom. The author's chair, when utilized in a learning classroom, allows children to learn through interaction with their peers that their writing and their ideas are valued (Calkins, 1986; Graves & Hansen,

1983). Children need to support one another in their writing and to take risks if they want to produce good writing. Author's chair provides this support and encourages the class to become "... a real community of authors" (Lamme, 1989, p. 707).

Summary

The issue of becoming literate is one which many researchers and educators will continue to explore. Parents, teachers, administrators, and researchers are all looking for practices that will foster success in literacy development.

This chapter describes the theoretical context of the study, how children develop knowledge about print , the importance of peer interaction, the benefits of journal writing, and the significance of author's chair. Results from the studies described emphasize the impact peers can have on emerging literacy and the importance of utilizing resources to meet individual students' needs. In the pursuit to meet individual students' needs, additional research needs to be pursued to seek and identify processes in classrooms that support interactive learning.

Chapter III

Methodology

Overview of Procedure

I explored and described the relationships of peers as literacy informers in peers emergent writers' acquisition of knowledge about print. The methods and procedures that I used in this study are presented in this chapter. The research design, teacher as researcher, research site, research informants, study procedure, instructional materials, data collection, and data analysis are described.

Research Design

Three case studies were developed to address the purpose of this study.

"Qualitative research in classrooms, where process as well as product are examined, gives researchers a better idea of how children write and, in many cases, information on why these children make certain choices in their writing" (Russell, 1985, p. 4). The qualitative research methodology of a case study design was used to determine the effects peers have on emergent writers' acquisition of knowledge of print. According to Best and Kahn (1993), "the case study probes deeply and analyzes interactions between the factors that explain present status or that influence change or growth" (p. 193). The case study allows researchers to investigate, describe, and analyze students in a classroom.

In addition to the case study methodology, I utilized contextualism in my study. This allowed me to examine my informants in their natural setting without imposing outside constraints on the students. It allowed me to focus on writing as an evolving process, not just an end product. Contextualism is considered as an alternative to the traditional methodological choice of positivism which removes the context in writing (Myers, 1985).

My study investigated the context of kindergartners writing with the assistance of their peers. It probed deeply and analyzed the relationships of peers as literacy informers

in a classroom and examined how they influence and affect emergent writing and knowledge about print. The study relied on fieldwork to describe the behaviors of students. My goal was to translate peer interactions and construct interpretations of the social experiences. Each case study provides examples of students' writing development over a three month time period.

Teacher as Researcher

"Teacher research is one of the ways not only to inspire and renew teacher commitment but also to enable teachers to appreciate the complexity of their own classrooms" (Myers, 1985, p. 2). Teachers use research to learn about students, their classroom, or instructional approaches. Teacher research provides new direction which can guide and inform other teachers, administrators, and others involved in school life. Classroom research provides teachers with the opportunity to question and observe in a classroom setting. Since I observed my own classroom, I was a participant observer. My observations consisted of social interactions among my three informants.

My roles as both teacher and researcher had both benefits and limitations. The benefits consisted of my prior knowledge of the curriculum and expectations in kindergarten, the students' familiarity with journal writing and author's chair procedures used in the study, and the informants' comfort level with my observational note-taking while they were working.

The limitations of being both teacher and researcher consisted of trying to document as closely as possible the conversations that occurred during journal writing, and the dual role of simultaneously observing and working with the students.

The benefits and limitations of being both the teacher and researcher influenced the process as well as the outcomes of this study.

Research Site

The setting for my research was an urban school kindergarten. The school was a Chapter I school where 30% of the students qualified for free and reduced meals. The

school served approximately 500 students and was a pre-kindergarten through sixth grade building. The school served Anglo, African American, Asian American, and Hispanic children who lived in the school's neighborhood, and who were bused from several surrounding neighborhoods within the district. The primary language spoken at this school was English.

The classroom chosen for my study was a developmental kindergarten where the activities and materials were both age and individually appropriate. The classroom was child-centered, where children were encouraged to make choices and to take responsibility for the room and their actions. In a developmental kindergarten, the teacher's role is to set up an environment which will meet all children's needs. In my classroom, centers were used to facilitate and encourage student learning at all different learning levels. Activities were set up in centers that were relevant to the students' interests and had intended purposes of teaching the required objectives in an appropriate manner. Children were actively involved in their learning. They were making choices, socializing, and accomplishing activities that were of interest to them.

In addition to centers, children were encouraged and given many opportunities to develop as readers/writers. The classroom was set up with literature-based reading activities involving the four language arts: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Children used language for meaningful purposes as they discussed ideas and thoughts, questioned each other, and role played. These meaningful activities involving the four language arts encouraged the development of emergent literacy (Fisher, 1991).

Informants

My study was conducted with three kindergarten students from an intact class which was socially and ethnically balanced. The average teacher student ratio was 22:1. Because of cultural and social explanations of observed gender differences in reading achievement (Downing, May, & Ollila, 1982), the students in the study were all females.

The female students in the class were placed in one of three groups; above

average, average, and below average writers. This placement occurred in September, prior to the pilot study. I placed the students in one of the three groups based on their journal writing. Students were considered above average in writing if they drew pictures and wrote using random letters, invented, or conventional spelling. Students were considered average in writing if they drew pictures and wrote using scribble writing and random letters. Students were considered below average in writing if they drew pictures and wrote using scribble writing only.

An independent teacher randomly selected one child's name from each category resulting in one above average student, one average student, and one below average student. Thus, each category had one female informant with a total of three female informants for the study. The informants were at least five years old on or before the state mandated date of October 15th. Parental permission was obtained from each child's parent and approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board. The three informants chosen for the study were given pseudonyms to maintain their privacy. The following descriptions provide a brief profile of the chosen informants.

Annie

Annie appeared to be a very happy, sociable child who often expressed herself through art and with words both orally and graphically. Annie was usually smiling and laughing at school. She spent a lot of time in the art center and she often made and shared her art with her friends. Annie seemed to be well-liked by her peers and could easily perform the roles of leader, follower, or informant. She appeared to have many friends and was consistently helpful and friendly when new children arrived in the class.

Annie was always willing to share her ideas with the class. She raised her hand often during class discussions. She organized her thoughts well and spoke fluently. She seemed to have a rich background of literature. She eagerly participated in story time by sharing her ideas, predicting, and drawing conclusions.

Annie lived at home with both her mother and her father. She did not have other siblings at home, but did have a dog at home that she talked about often. English was the only language spoken at home. Annie was read to often at home. At school, Annie enjoyed reading stories from pictures. At the end of the school year, Annie was reading some stories independently.

Annie worked hard and showed pride in most of her work. She always completed her assignments. Annie consistently performed above average work. Her pictures were elaborate with details and colors. She usually attempted writing on her work. Annie started the school year with scribble writing, proceeded with random letters, and eventually used invented spelling. These characteristics placed her in the above average category.

Susie

Susie was an affectionate child who seemed to enjoy the social interactions of school. She readily conversed with her peers during group activities and during center-time. She was well-liked by her peers, who enjoyed her humor and bubbly laughter. She spent a lot of time interacting with her peers both socially and academically.

Susie was very enthusiastic about school. She often commented that she never liked Fridays because she knew that she could not come to school on Saturdays or Sundays. She was always willing to try new activities and she often asked to hear new stories. Susie loved to share her ideas, especially if they were humorous and could make the class laugh. During numerous occasions, the class laughed with her during her discussions.

Susie lived at home with her mother, father, and older sister. English was the main language spoken at home, although the mother's native language, Korean, was also spoken so that the children would be familiar with that language, too. Susie was fluent in English and was learning Korean. Susie was read to on a regular basis by both parents and her sister.

Susie came to school with lots of ideas. When writing her ideas down on paper, she drew pictures and attempted writing by experimenting with scribble writing, letter like forms, and random letters. Susie did not attempt conventional spelling or invented spelling at the time of placement. Her writing at the time thus placed her in the average category.

Erika

Erika was a quiet and reserved student. She seldom shared her thoughts and ideas during story time. She was very curious about science, especially the planet Earth and dinosaurs. She enjoyed reading books and magazines about nature, planets, and dinosaurs.

Erika lived at home with her mother, father, and older brother. English was the only language spoken at home. Erika was read to by both parents on a regular basis. She seemed to enjoy being read to at home and at school. She often asked me to read to her at school.

Erika seemed to enjoy playing and working independently at school. If included with other children, she seemed to get along with her peers, but she preferred to be alone and was content with this choice. During center-time and recess, she often played alone.

Erika came to school with many unique ideas. She usually expressed herself with pictures. She started the year scribbling and gradually moved into drawing. Once she began drawing she became interested in printing her name. She struggled with printing and copying letters . Erika's work was inconsistent. Sometimes her work was satisfactory, but often it was below average. She did not attempt to write using random letters, invented spelling, or conventional spelling. Therefore, she was placed in the below average category.

Study Procedure

The research study began in December and continued for approximately three months, until the end of March. Since I was both teacher and researcher I was already

familiar with the classroom setting, the instruction that was occurring, and the negotiation of my roles as both teacher and researcher.

In September, during the first week of school, I modeled journal writing for my students. I used the chalkboard to demonstrate journal writing by modeling pictures only, a picture and scribble writing, a picture and random letters, a picture and invented spelling, and a picture with conventional spelling. I emphasized the point that any of the above techniques were acceptable. I also encouraged the students to do their best work and to experiment with all of the techniques. Each technique was explored independently for a few days so that all of the children would have exposure to each one.

Throughout the school year I introduced alphabet letters and sounds through literature. I modeled my own writing as I worked with the children in the areas of literature and language arts. Instruction ranged from a love of reading to phonics skills, as dictated by the school district's Reading/Language Arts curriculum. (See Appendix A for details of the required instruction.)

The journal writing that occurred was a literacy activity that was not required by the district, but was implemented to develop the students' language skills, both oral and written. The students were given twenty, uninterrupted minutes each day for journal writing. The first fifteen minutes were used for writing time, and the last five minutes were used for author's chair. The students started each journal by copying the date on their page and then they were free to write about a subject of their choice. Peer interaction for choosing the topic, developing ideas and the content, clarifying meaning, spelling words, and reading and sharing was permitted and encouraged during the writing time. The children were encouraged to sign their name when their entry was completed. Upon completion of their journal entry, the students had the choice of writing/drawing on paper or reading a book.

When writing time was completed, two different children each day shared their journal entry with the class in the author's chair. The two children were selected from the

class list which had the children's names organized in alphabetical order. I rotated the children through author's chair by choosing the first two children from the class list that were present at school on that particular day. The following day, the next two children on the list who were present at school were chosen to share in author's chair. This method of choosing authors to share was utilized throughout the year. If a child was absent from school on the day he/she was to share, the next child on the list shared. The absent child shared on the day that he/she returned to school. The children in the class rotated daily into author's chair so that all of the children shared their journal entries approximately every ten days. The remainder of the class listened to the shared entry, stated what they liked, asked the author what his or her favorite part was, asked questions to clarify, and made suggestions for changes. I modeled these procedures at the beginning of the school year. Once the children became familiar with this process, they became responsible for asking the questions. The authors who shared their journal entries called on the children for questions. The questions were asked or stated in random order, according to the students' interests, although students usually followed the original order of the author's chair procedures which had been modeled for them. (See Appendix B for author's chair procedure.)

Journal writing occurred at the beginning of each day. While the children were writing their journal entries, I sat down to write field notes of the conversations discussed at the tables of the three chosen informants. I wrote my field notes at the very beginning of journal writing. I observed and wrote for two minutes each day for each of the three informants. I started with a different informant each day, then moved on to the other two informants and kept the field notes in a notebook. I recorded the conversations as quickly as I could with as much detail as I could so that my field notes would be as accurate as possible. If the children had a very detailed conversation, I wrote down as much as possible. My focus was on recording the context of the conversation. The

children were not distracted by me recording field notes as this procedure occurred throughout the year in all subject areas.

After I completed the written field notes on the three informants, I asked each one of them what they had written/drawn. A description of the journal writing was recorded on a post-it note and attached to the journal entry. Then I announced that there was one minute left to write so that the children could finish their writing. Finally, we moved to author's chair.

During author's chair time, I assisted with assigning the two authors for the day, giving the children prompts to ask author's chair questions if needed (see Appendix B), and recording author's chair sessions for the day both through audio tapes and through written notes on an author's chair form. These procedures were followed daily for the three months.

Instructional Materials Used

Writing materials were provided for the journal writing. Each child received a new journal each Monday that contained five blank sheets of paper. Each day of the week at school, the children wrote on one page of their journal. They could write on both the front and the back of the page. The children had access to pencils, erasers, and crayons for their writing. An author's chair was also available for the children to utilize for sharing their journals. Books and drawing paper were also available for the children to use when they finished their journal writing for the day. The books were available after the journaling was complete for the day. The books were not utilized during writing time.

Data Collection

I used a naturalistic inquiry paradigm (Patton, 1990), because it employed observations of social qualities or behaviors as a source of data. This allowed me to observe peer interactions as they occurred in the classroom during journal writing time

and during author's chair. The information I collected was dated and stored for future analysis.

My study had a duration of 43 days. The study began December 10, 1994 and continued until March 10, 1995. My major data collection techniques were written field note entries regarding conversations with peers, written descriptions and photocopies of each of the three informants' daily journal entries, a written description of each journal entry shared during author's chair, audiotapes of author's chair sessions, and written notes of author's chair sessions. These procedures for collecting data provided me with multiple sources of information for the analysis of my case studies.

The written field notes were recorded daily. They described the oral interactions that occurred among the informants and their peers during the journal writing phase. There were 113 written field note entries. Annie, the high ability student, had 36 field note entries. Susie, the middle ability student, had 40 field note entries. Erika, the low ability student, had 37 field note entries. The difference in total number of field note entries was due to student absences. While taking field notes, I typically sat behind the child being observed. This allowed me the opportunity to observe and record the informant's interactions or involvement with their journal writing. Each of the three informants were observed daily for two minutes.

The written descriptions were recorded daily when the informants told me about their pictures/writing. They described their journal entries and their writing. I recorded 113 descriptions during my study. Annie, the high ability writer, had 36 entries. Susie, the middle ability writer, had 40 descriptions. Erika, the low ability writer, had 37 entries. The children read their writing to me and I recorded it on post-it-notes and placed it in their journals. The children were comfortable with this procedure as they often read their writing to me.

The informants' journal entries were collected and photocopied daily for documentation of knowledge about print. I photocopied 113 journal entries during the

study. Annie, the high ability informant, had 36 photocopied entries. Susie, the middle ability informant, had 40 photocopies. Erika, the low ability informant, had 37 photocopied entries. This provided me with written data documenting writing development and print conventions that occurred in journal writing.

Written author's chair notes describing each author's chair session were also recorded by me during each author's chair experience. Annie, the high ability student, had four written author's chair notes. Susie, the middle ability student, had five written author's chair notes. Erika, the low ability student, had five written author's chair notes. They were recorded on the author's chair form that would contain the transcriptions from the audiotapes.

Audiotapes were made daily during author's chair to verify my notes on student interactions that occurred. This allowed me to record peer interactions and suggestions to and from the three informants as they occurred during author's chair. The audiotapes were not concealed during the tapings. Annie, the high ability informant, had four audiotapes. Susie, the middle ability informant, had five audiotapes. Erika, the low ability informant, had five audiotapes. The audiotapes were transcribed on author's chair forms each day (see Appendix B).

These procedures were followed for three months, and provided data that was studied to determine the effects peers have on emergent writers' acquisition of knowledge about print.

Data Analysis

To define my data analysis categories, I conducted a pilot study in September and October, prior to the study. The pilot study was conducted in a similar manner as my actual study. I randomly selected three female students from my kindergarten class. One female student was chosen from each category: high, middle, and low ability. The students were placed in these categories in September, prior to the pilot study. The placement was based on their writing samples. During the pilot study, journals were

written in daily by the students. Written descriptions were recorded on post-it notes each day describing each informants' writing/picture. Written field notes were recorded daily in a log describing the interactions between the pilot study informants and their peers. The notes were recorded at the beginning of each journal session. Notes were taken for two minutes on each informant. Author's chair sessions were also audiotaped and transcribed daily.

The data obtained from the pilot study was then analyzed. I used the constant comparative method (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) to discover my core categories. I was looking for print concepts that were being developed in writing by the pilot study informants, or concepts that were suggested or encouraged by peers. I collected my data, looked for recurrent examples of print concepts, then coded my data into one of the core categories. The following print concepts emerged from my knowledge of children's writing and from the journal samples, field notes, and author's chair sessions.

The print concepts that were relevant to this study were 1) informants attempting writing to convey meaning regardless of their writing level, 2) informants associating letters with their corresponding sounds, 3) informants writing for a functional purpose, and 4) informants knowing that oral language can be written down and then read (Morrow, 1993).

The first print concept, writing to convey meaning regardless of writing level, emerged from peer questions regarding what journal entries were about. The second print concept, associating letters with their corresponding sounds, emerged from the informants and peers assisting each other with letter-sound correspondence. Examples were found in field note entries. The third print concept, writing for a functional purpose, emerged from the different kinds of writing that developed during journal writing, which were later described during author's chair. The fourth print concept, knowing that oral language can be written down and then read, emerged from field notes that emphasized the need to record the oral language that was being discussed.

During data analysis of the study, I decided to collapse the first, third, and fourth print concepts because they overlapped in terms of the similarity of elements which defined the print concepts. Therefore, my data analysis centered on the following two print concepts:1) informants associating letters with their corresponding sounds, and 2) writing is meaningful, functional, and represents oral language.

The credibility of this study's analysis was safeguarded by an independent judge assisting in the analysis with the researcher, the audiotaping of peer interactions during author's chair, and the collection of written documents (journal entries) for analysis. The independent judge was a certified Reading Specialist who worked in the same district. She has had experiences as a classroom teacher, a reading teacher, and as a researcher.

During the journal writing and author's chair period, the children engaged in talk with their peers. Within the field notes of the conversational exchanges, the independent judge and I looked for episodes where the children encouraged and directed their peers' journal writing by suggesting comments that pertained to the two print concepts. For each informant in the study, we examined all literacy conversations that occurred either during journal writing or author's chair. Both the independent judge and I looked at each example of field notes and journal entries, classified them, and then compared our classification. If a discrepancy occurred, we discussed our analysis and agreed on a single classification. We classified the field note conversations and journal entries as examples of support for print concept one or print concept two. We also looked at author's chair sessions for examples of comments that encouraged the use of the two print concepts. Comments were classified as examples of support for print concept one, or print concept two. I then totaled the number of examples of support for each print concept and for each subject. Then I extracted examples of interactions that supported the print concepts. By classifying data in this matter, I sought to understand the interrelationships between peers in composing and peers in teaching or coaching. The results are discussed in the case studies.

The three case studies were then compared for similarities and differences regarding the impact peers have on the acquisition of knowledge about print among children with different writing abilities.

Summary

This chapter describes the procedures and methods used in obtaining information that supports interactive learning among peers. The research design, the research site, the informants, the study procedure, the instructional materials, the techniques for data collection and the procedures for data analysis were presented in this chapter.

Chapter IV

Results

The data collected during this study was holistic, descriptive data: drawn and written journal entries, written dictation of journal entries, written descriptions of the informants' conversations that occurred during journal writing, written transcriptions from audiotapes of the children's interactions during author's chair, and written notes taken during author's chair. The information was collected to determine the relationship peers have on print development.

Upon analysis of the data, the four print concepts that were originally considered were collapsed into two print concepts because the characteristics defining three of the print concepts were similar. The two remaining print concepts were 1) Writers associating letters with their corresponding sounds, and 2) Writing is meaningful, functional, and represents oral language. Examples of oral interactions and written language were examined under each print concept to verify acquisition of knowledge about print.

Writers Associating Letters with Their Corresponding Sounds

Throughout the school year, a reading curriculum was taught which incorporated the introduction of each letter, both capital and lower case, and their corresponding sounds. Appendix A shows the sequence of letter introduction and instruction.

In September, the kindergarten class was introduced to the different forms of writing. The children had their choice of which form of writing that they would utilize in their journal entry. They could choose from pictures only, scribble writing, random letters, invented spelling, or conventional writing. The students were also encouraged to ask their peers for assistance in writing. This encouragement occurred before the actual study began.

Field notes recorded during journal writing provided 113 different entries among peers in which they interacted during the writing process. Sixteen out of the 113 entries, where each entry represents the two minute interaction time, exhibit peers assisting the writer with the association of letters with their corresponding sounds. The frequency with which the informants utilized peers to assist with letter-sound correspondence is presented in Table 1.

Name	Total Interactions	Peer Assistance
All Three Informants	113	16
Annie	36	8
Susie	40	7
Erika	37	1

Table 1. Total Number of Examples of Peers Assisting with Letter-Sound Correspondence.

Annie, the high ability writer, had eight interactions out of 36 total recorded interactions in which peers worked together to write letters with their corresponding sounds. An example of Annie assisting one of her peers with the writing of letters with their corresponding sounds is illustrated in Figure 1.

Silly Face
February 21, 1995 (Field Notes)

Peer: How do you spell "Silly Face", Annie?
Annie: "S".
Peer: O.K., I've got the "s".
Annie: "L".
Peer: O.K., I've got the "l". "E" is next. Yeah, "e".
Annie: "F" is next.
Peer: O.K., what then?
Annie: "A" is next.
Peer: Is that it?
Annie: /S/ is last. That is "s".
Peer: Thanks.

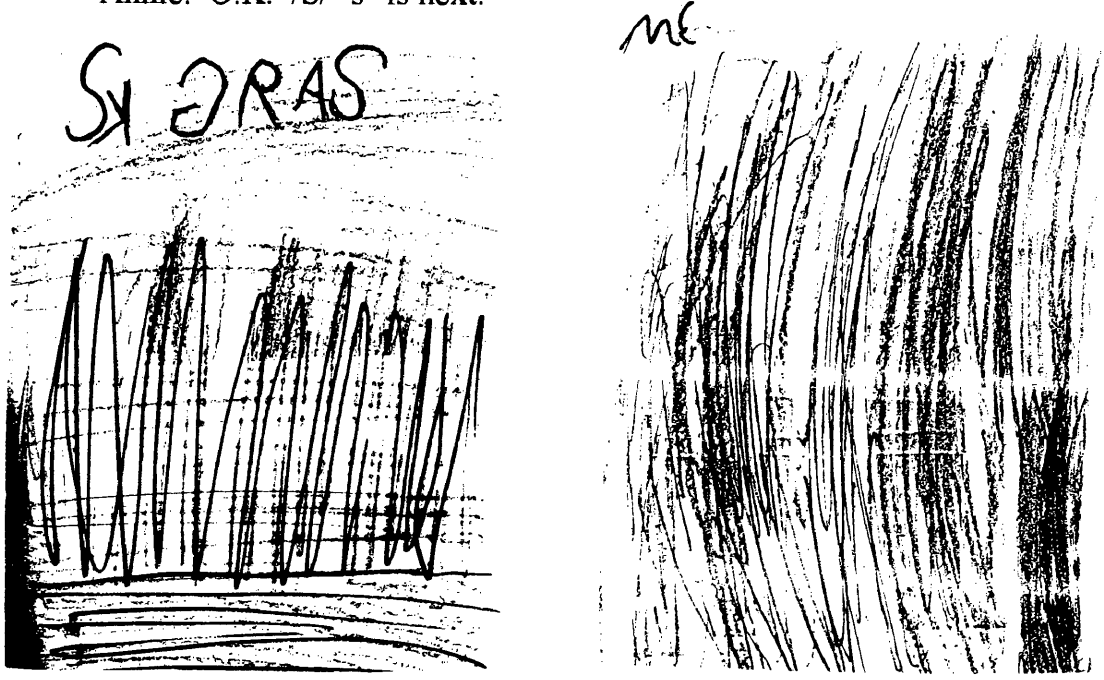
Figure 1: Annie's discussion of a February 21, 1995 Journal Entry.

In this example, Annie was asked by a peer to assist with the writing process. Annie named the letters that she heard, and the peer recorded the letters. This example provides support that Annie influenced the print development of one of her peers.

Annie's peers also assisted Annie in her writing. An example of this type of exchange can be seen in Figure 2.

Grass
March 3, 1995 (Field Notes)

Annie: I'm writing "grass". It starts with a "g". /Grass/ /gr/.
Peer: "R". Yeah, "r".
Annie: Now what? It sounds like /i/.
Peer: I think it's "a".
Annie: O.K. /S/ "s" is next.



Annie's dictation for March 3, 1995:

The sky and the grass were talking.

Figure 2: Annie's March 3, 1995 Journal Entry.

In this example, a peer was a writing coach who assisted in the writing process. Annie stated what she was writing to a peer, and her peer started associating letters with the sounds and assisted Annie with her writing. With a peer's assistance, Annie was able to record her thoughts about the sky and the grass.

Annie's interaction with her peers provides examples of peers assisting each other with letter-sound correspondence in their writing. Annie performed both the assisting

role, in which she helped her peers figure out corresponding sounds, and the role of questioner, asking peers for assistance in her writing.

Susie, the middle ability writer, had seven recorded interactions out of 40 total recorded interactions with her peers in which peers assisted each other with writing consonant sounds. An Example of Susie assisting a peer appears in Figure 3.

Me
December 15, 1994 (Field Notes)

Susie: What should I add?
Peer: What did you draw?
Susie: This says, "Me."
Peer: Add snow.
Susie: O.K. Look, each page is different.
Susie: This is my Santa Claus.
Susie: This is my elf.
Peer: How do you spell elf?
Susie: /a/ "a" /l/ "l" /l/ "l" /f/ "f" .
Peer: Thanks.

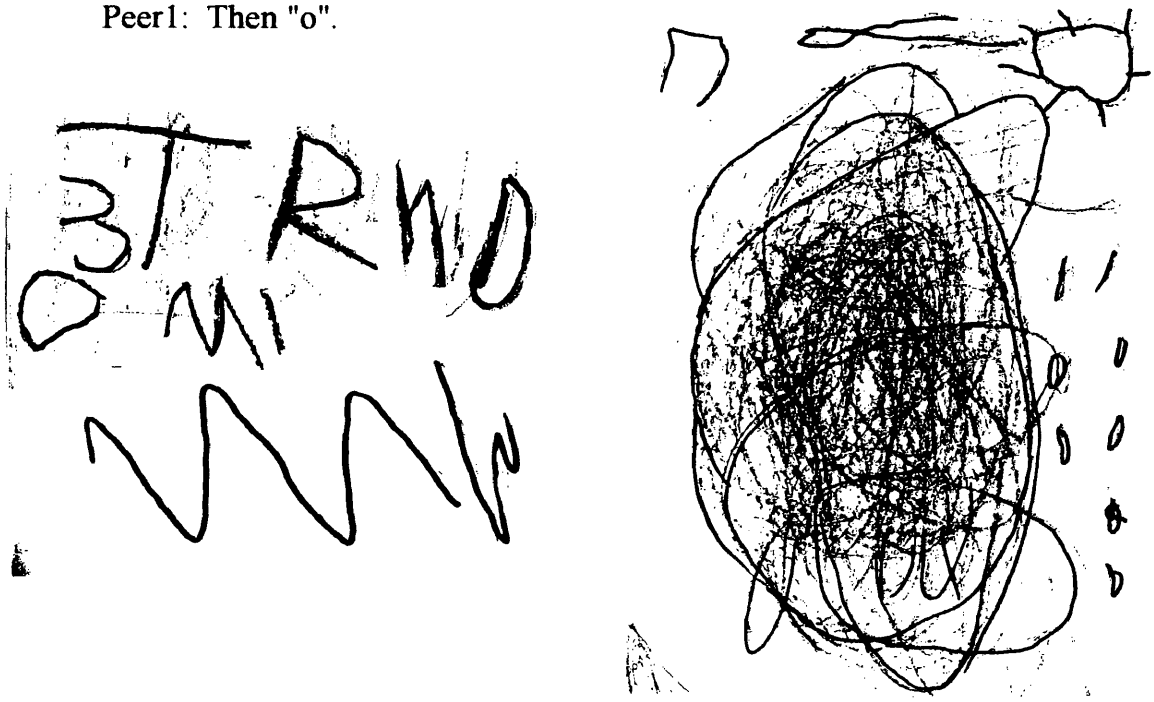
Figure 3: Susie's discussion of a December 15, 1994 Journal Entry.

This field note example provides data demonstrating a peer asking Susie to assist with the writing process. First, Susie and her peer were engaged in a discussion pertaining to the journal's content. Next, the discussion evolved into Susie's peer asking her for assistance with letter-sound correspondence. Susie fulfilled her peer's request as she helped her to spell "elf."

Peers also assisted Susie with her writing of consonant sounds. An example of this interaction appears in Figure 4.

Tornado
March 1, 1995 Field Notes)

Susie: I'm making a tornado. /t/ "t".
Peer1: It starts with "t". /Tor/ "r".
Susie: Is "r" next?
Peer1: Yeah, /tor na do/. "N" is next.
Peer2: /Tor na do/ /do/ "d".
Susie: "D" /d/.
Peer1: Then "o".



Susie's dictation for March 1, 1995:

Tornado.

Figure 4: Susie's March 1, 1995 Journal Entry.

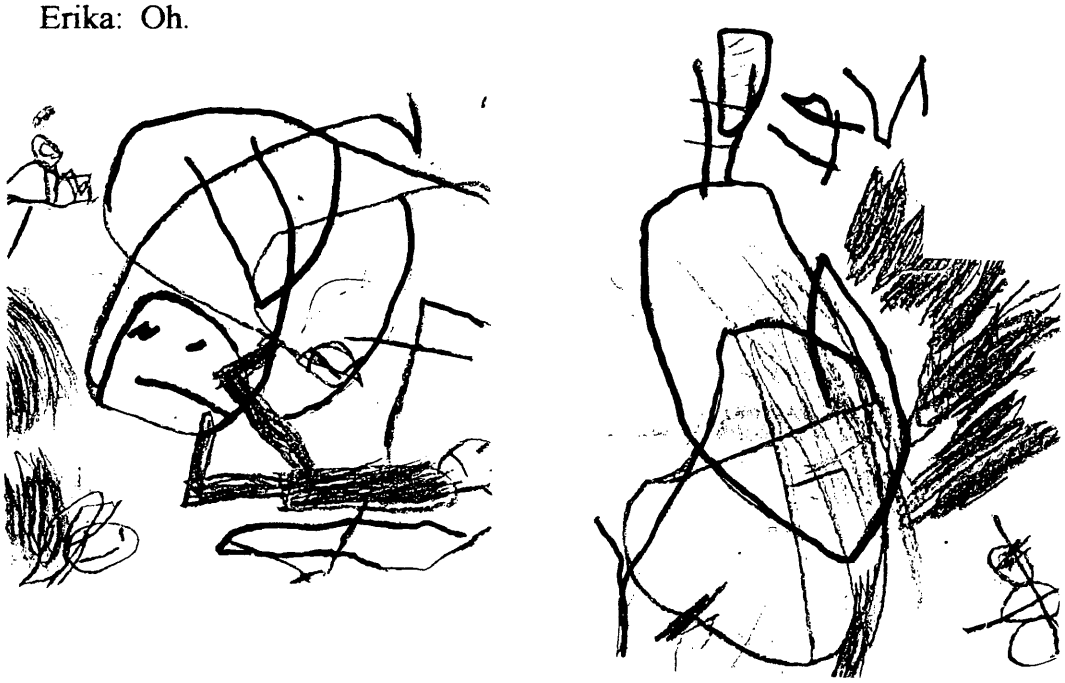
In this example, Susie described her journal's content and started to sound out the word tornado. Susie's peer assisted Susie with the letter-sound association so that she could record her language. This example demonstrates a joint effort portraying peers working together to develop print. Susie's end result was written in the form of a label.

These examples both illustrate the concept of writers associating letters with their corresponding sounds. In both of these examples involving Susie, the middle ability writer, peers assisted each other with the writing process.

Erika, the low ability writer, had one recorded interaction out of 37 total interactions in which peers assisted each other with letter-sound association in writing. The following example demonstrates Erika's letter-sound interaction with her peers.

The End
December 16, 1994 (Field Notes)

Erika: Can we bring our journals home today?
Peer1: Yeah, cause today is Friday. We always take them home on Friday.
Peer1: How do you spell "The end"?
Peer2: "D" "n".
Erika: What does an "N" look like?
Peer2: Like this. (Writes N) Up, down, up.
Erika: Oh.



Erika's dictation for December 16, 1994:

A snowman and a pattern.

Figure 5: Erika's December 16, 1994 Journal Entry.

This interaction by Erika and her peers illustrates the concept of writers associating letters with their corresponding sounds. In this example, Erika was involved in a conversation involving letter-sound correspondence. Peers had asked how to spell "The end", and another peer assisted with the letter-sound association. Erika benefited from this conversation by having a peer describe how to record a letter "N". Erika wrote the letters that her peers were discussing in her own journal. This demonstrates how peers can assist with the writing process.

These interactions by all three informants indicate that peers do assist in determining letter-sound correspondence in journal writing.

Writing is Meaningful, Functional, and Represents Oral Language

Children write to convey meaning in a functional form which can replicate oral language was the basis of this print concept. Examples of the three informants utilizing their peers to assist in incorporating these components in their journal entries and through their discussions while writing (written field notes) were examined to determine peer impact on writing.

Throughout the study, I encouraged the kindergartners to write journal entries based on their own personal thoughts and interests. There were 113 total journal entries. Every journal entry examined in this study represented writing to convey meaning. The children chose their journal topics and developed their ideas without my direction.

There were no guidelines given to the kindergartners to direct writing style. Upon the initial analysis of the journal entries and their dictations, the independent judge and I noted the emergence of three reoccurring categories which classified the informants' writing into one of three functional purposes of writing. The three categories were 1) Lists, 2) Labels, and 3) Thoughts. These categories and the frequency with which the informants utilized each category are presented in Table 2.

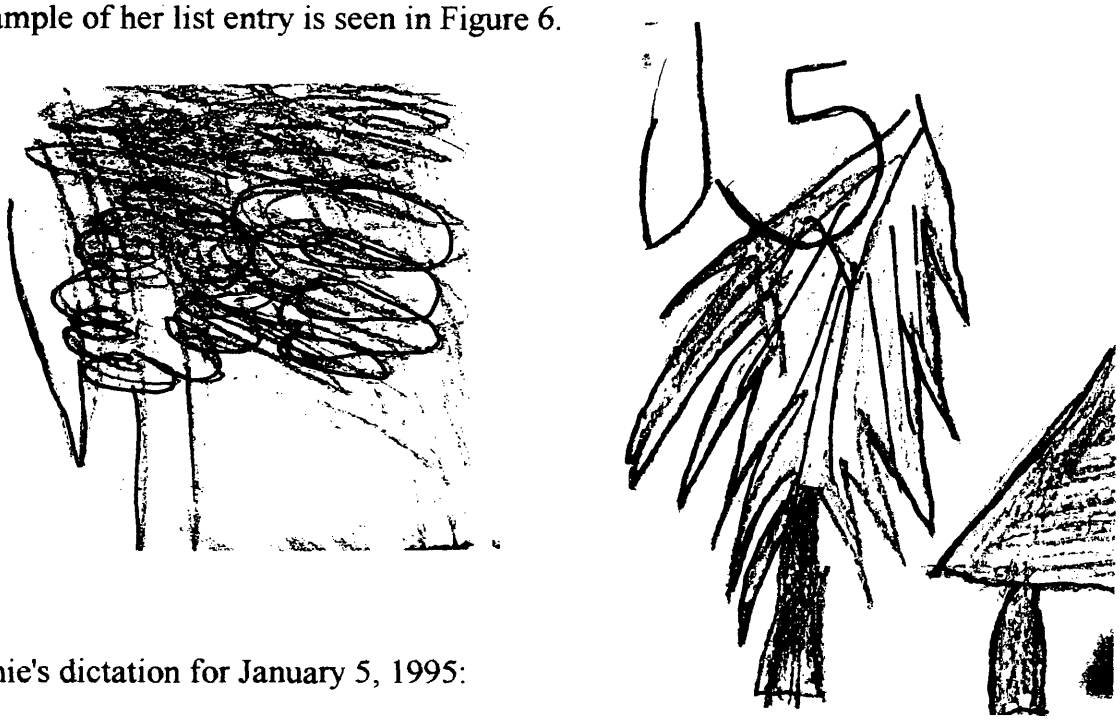
Name	Total	Lists	Labels	Thoughts
Annie	36	5	5	26
Susie	40	5	23	12
Erika	37	6	9	22

Table 2. Total Number of Examples of the Functional Purposes of Writing.

Lists

The lists consisted of a series of the objects drawn/written in the journal entry. All three of the informants had written some of their journal entries in the form of lists.

Annie, the high ability writer, had five journal entries written as lists. An example of her list entry is seen in Figure 6.



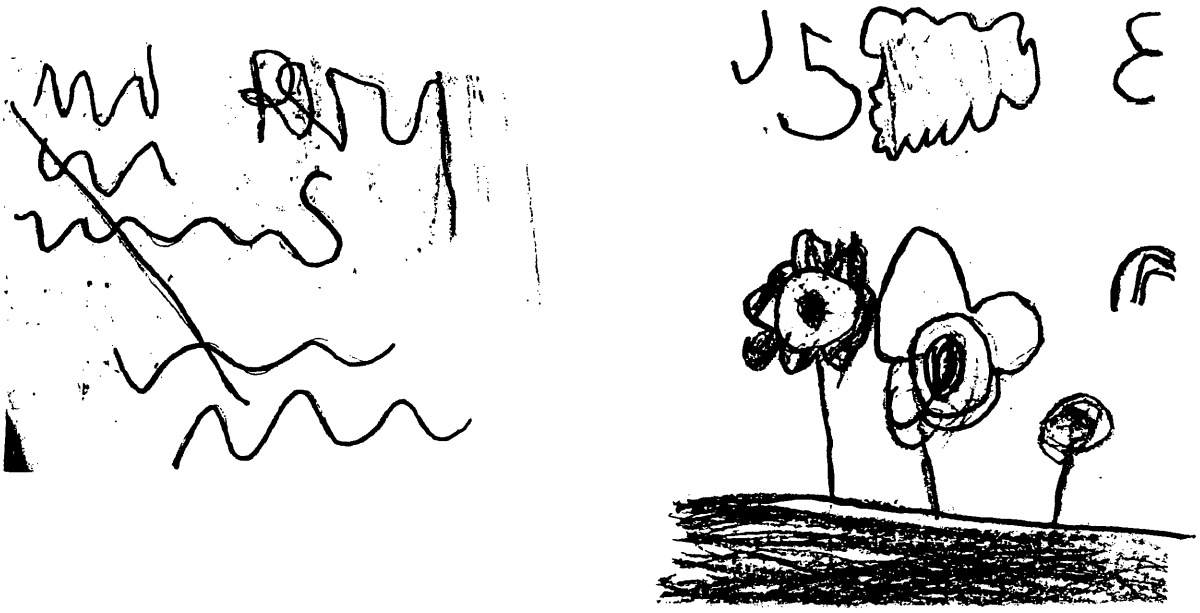
Annie's dictation for January 5, 1995:

I made two Christmas trees and the sky.

Figure 6: Annie's January 5, 1995 Journal Entry.

This example, written by the high ability informant, is an example of writing that conveys meaning in the form of a series of objects. It is also representative of Annie's journal entries classified as lists. Annie illustrated and described through dictation her journal's content, Christmas trees and the sky.

Susie, the middle ability writer, had five entries which were in the form of a list. An example of her list entry appears in Figure 7.



Susie's dictation for January 5, 1995:

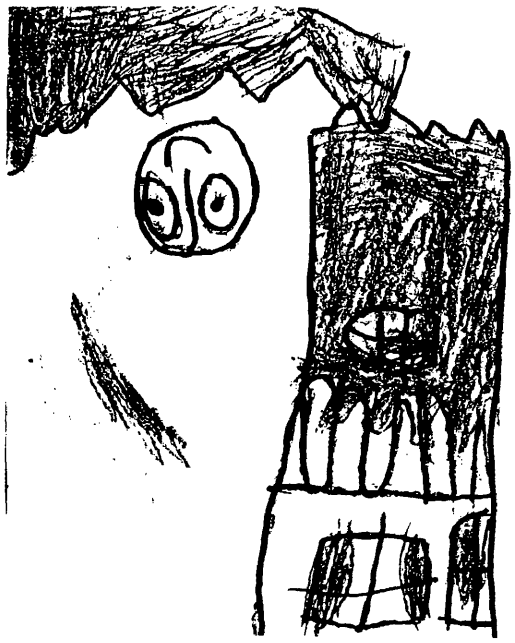
My cloud, and my flower, and my colorful ground.

Figure 7: Susie's January 5, 1995 Journal Entry.

Susie's journal entry is an example of the middle ability informant writing to convey meaning in the form of a list. Susie's journal entry and dictation named three different elements in her journal entry and thus, was classified as a list example.

Susie had five entries which described a series of objects that were drawn and written in her journal entries. Susie's dictation of her entries depict her entries as lists.

Erika, the low ability writer, had six journal entries in the writing format of a list. An example of Erika writing in the form of a list appears in Figure 8.



Erika's dictation of January 9, 1995:

A house and a cat.

Figure 8: Erika's January 9, 1995 Journal Entry.

Erika, the low ability writer, conveyed her journal's content in the form of a list. She named the two elements that she was writing about in her dictation. This entry represents an example of a list, a form of writing, and a way to convey meaning.

Erika wrote six journal entries in the form of lists. These entries provide examples of a functional purpose for writing, lists. All three informants used lists as a form of writing.

Labels

Labels consisted of one word used to describe a picture or an object in the journal entry. The labels were obtained from the informants' dictation of the journal entries. All three of the informants had written multiple journal entries in the form of labels.

Annie, the informant representing the high ability writers, had written five journal entries that were written using labels to describe her work. An example of her journal entry in the form of a label is seen in Figure 9.

Annie's dictation of December 20, 1994:

The Dark Crystal.

Figure 9: Annie's December 20, 1994 Journal Entry.

Annie's entry on December 20 was representative of her label entries that occurred throughout the study. Annie's entry was written as a label which conveyed the meaning of her journal's content, in the form of an object with a descriptor.

Susie, the informant representing the middle ability writers, had a total of 23 entries written in the form of labels. An example of her label entry is illustrated in Figure 10.

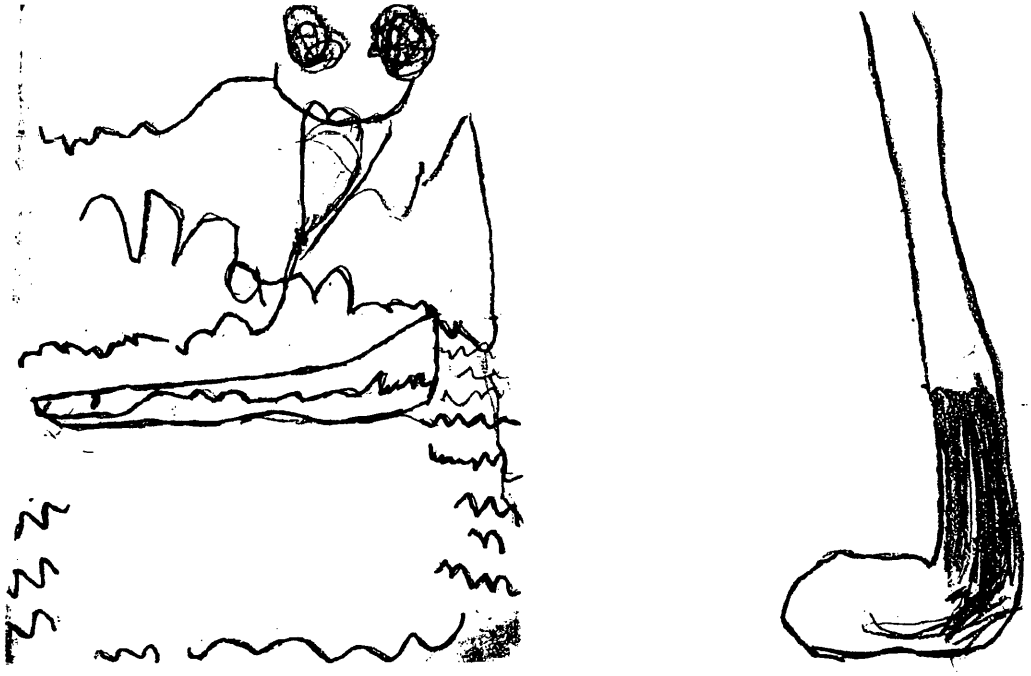
Susie's dictation of February 23, 1995:

Me.

Figure 10: Susie's February 23, 1995 Journal Entry.

This example, written by the middle ability writer, illustrates a journal entry that was categorized as a label. This example described Susie's journal entry by naming what it was she drew, herself. This example was representative of Susie's journal entries classified as labels.

Erika, the informant representing the low ability writers, had written nine journal entries which were classified as labels. Figure 11 illustrates an example of Erika writing with labels.



Erika's dictation of March 3, 1995:

X-Man's Foot.

Figure 11: Erika's March 3, 1995 Journal Entry.

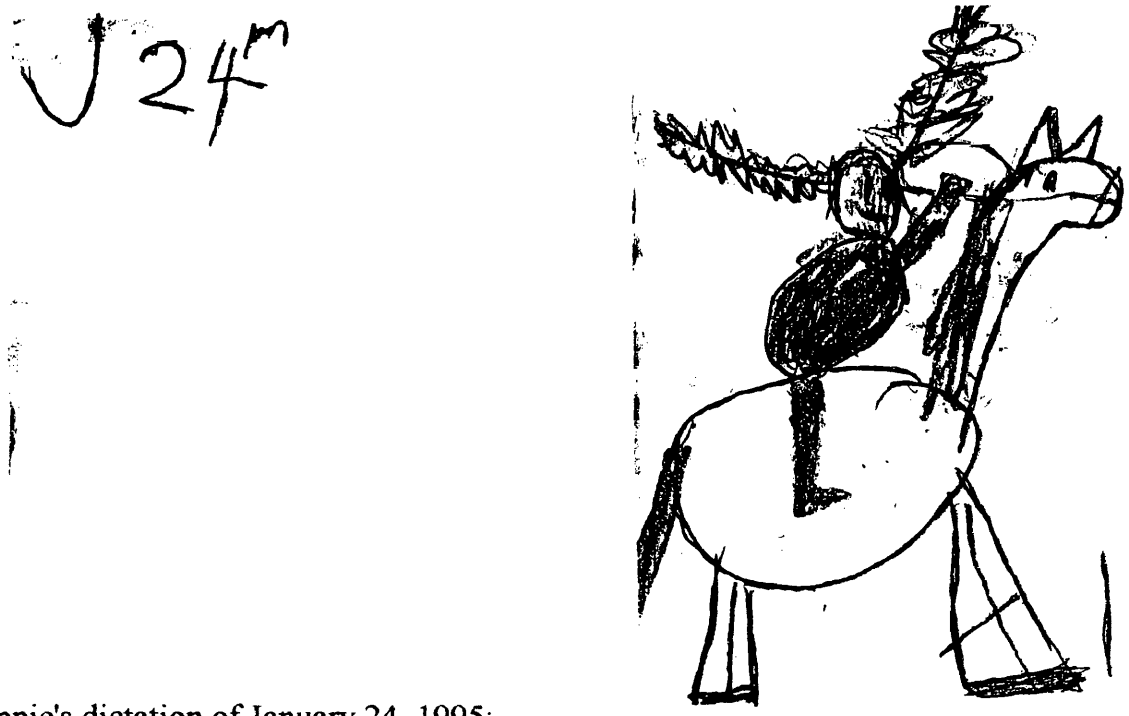
This example illustrates Erika, the low ability writer, writing with labels. Erika utilized the writing form of a label to convey her journal idea, X-man's foot. This example was consistent with Erika's journal entries classified as labels.

All three informants wrote journal entries and used labels to describe their entries. These examples all illustrate labeling as a functional purpose of writing.

Thoughts

Journal entries that were classified as thoughts were entries that contained a sentence or phrase which was used to explain the journal entry. Thoughts were most commonly used by the three informants.

Annie, the high ability writer, had written her thoughts in her journal 26 times out of her 36 total entries. An example of this type of entry follows:



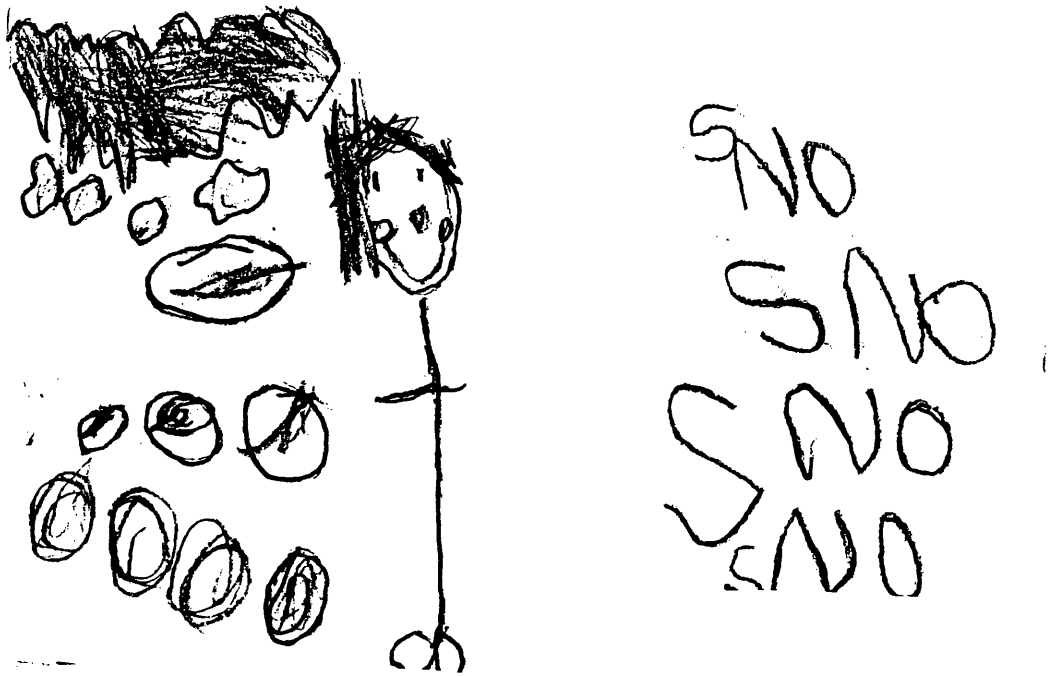
Annie's dictation of January 24, 1995:

Pippi Longstocking is riding her horse.

Figure 12: Annie's January 24, 1995 Journal Entry.

This example illustrates Annie, the high ability informant, writing for a functional purpose and recording her thought about Pippi Longstocking, in her journal. Annie's dictation of her journal entry describes her thought which is a way for her to convey meaning in a complete sentence format.

Susie, the middle ability writer, had 12 entries that were classified as thoughts. These entries occurred throughout the study. Figure 13 demonstrates an example of a thought entry by Susie.



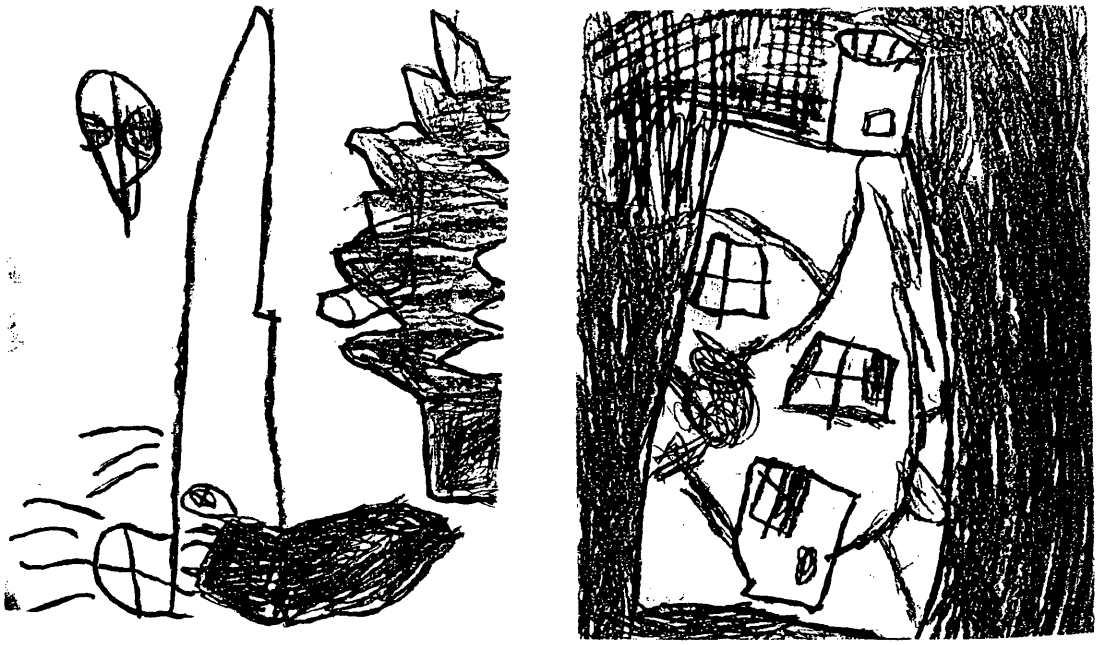
Susie's dictation of January 3, 1995:

The sun is melting the snow.

Figure 13: Susie's January 3, 1995 Journal Entry.

This entry provides an example of the middle ability writer recording her thoughts down in her journal. This example demonstrates writing for a functional purpose, to convey meaning in the form of writing through picture, words, and through oral dictation of the journal entry. Susie was describing snow.

Erika, the low ability writer, had a total of 22 entries out of 37 total entries that were recorded as thoughts. Figure 14 illustrates this writing form.



Erika's dictation of December 20, 1994:

A Christmas tree in my house.

Figure 14: Erika's December 20, 1994 Journal Entry.

This entry serves as an example of the low ability writer recording her thoughts in her journal. Erika's journal entry represents writing in the form of a thought which is a way to convey the journal's content. Erika's entry consisted of a picture and her oral dictation which described what was in her journal.

All three informants wrote journal entries in the form of thoughts. All three informants recorded their thoughts throughout the duration of the study. These examples of journal entries and dictations demonstrate a means to communicate thoughts and ideas in the form of writing.

The three categories that were used to classify the informants' journal entries provide examples of students using writing to communicate. The examples provided

opportunities for peers to see, hear, read, and discuss different forms of writing. The examples also illustrate the concept of conveying meaning through writing.

During journaling, the children were encouraged to share verbally their thoughts, ideas, and their journal entries with their peers. I modeled this sharing process in September when I introduced journal writing and author's chair. Sharing was emphasized as an important part of journaling.

All three of the informants consistently shared their thoughts and ideas during journal writing. Based on my field notes, 28 examples were recorded which depicted the three informants sharing their writing with their peers. The frequency with which the informants shared their journal's content with their peers is presented in Table 3.

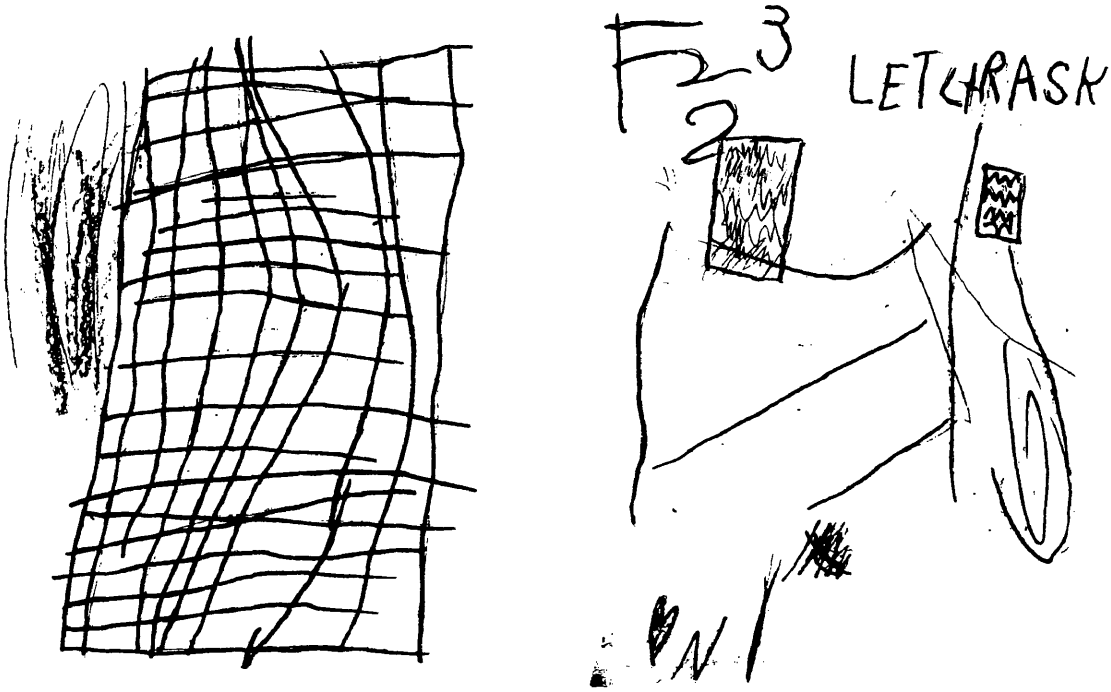
Name	Total Number of Shared Journals
Total	28
Annie	13
Susie	11
Erika	4

Table 3. Total Number of Examples of Informants Sharing their Journal's Content with Peers During Journal Writing.

Annie, the high ability writer, had 13 recorded examples of sharing her journal's content during writing. An example of her journal entry and interaction appears in Figure 15.

Little Rascals
February 23, 1995

Annie: I'm writing about the Little Rascals.
Annie: Have you seen the one with his hair standing up?
Peer: Oh yeah, he is funny.
Annie: Help me spell it. /Little /L/ "L".
Peer: Then "t".
Annie: Wait, /i/ I think that's "e".
Peer: Then you need "t".
Annie: /Little/ /l/ then "l".



Annie's dictation of February 23, 1995:

Little Rascals

Figure 15: Annie's February 23, 1995 Journal Entry.

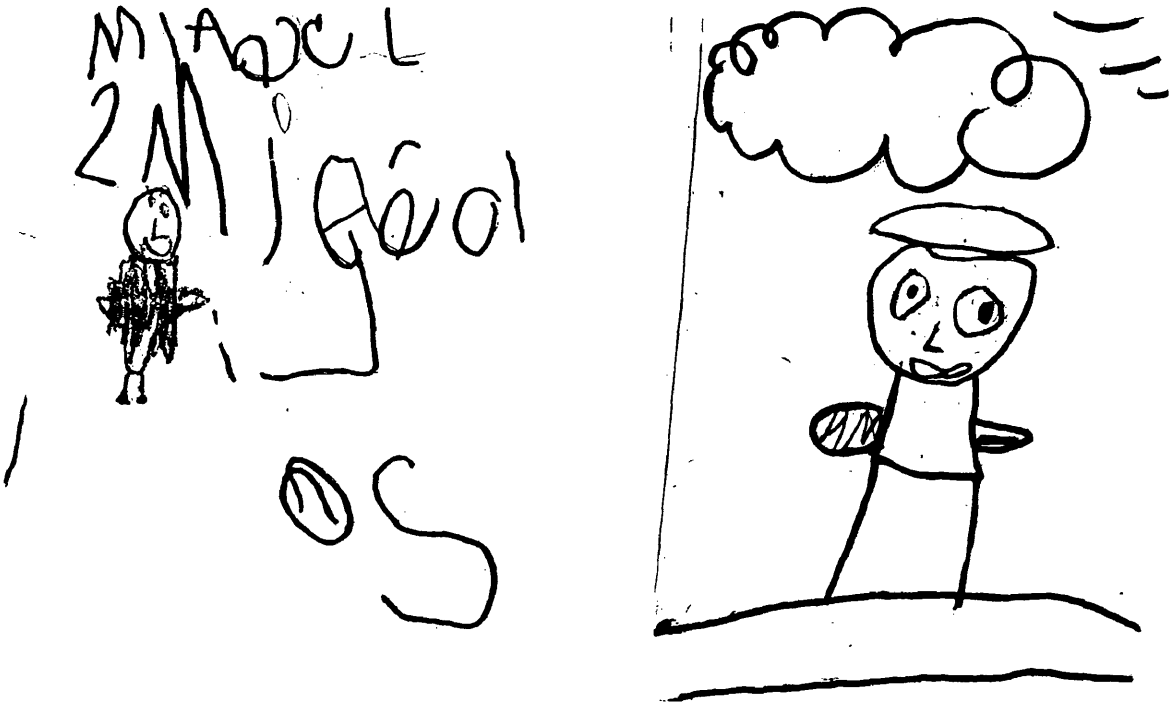
This example illustrates the concept that Annie's language can be written down and then read as dictation. It also demonstrates the concept that Annie's oral language, her explanation of her journal entry to her peers, was shared both through her conversation with her peers and graphically in her writing. This example was classified

as a label and depicts Annie's image of the Little Rascals. It also illustrates peers assisting with letter-sound correspondence.

Susie, the middle ability writer, had 11 recorded journal examples/interactions in which her language was written down and then shared during the journal writing phase of this study. The following is an example of this concept:

My Angel
March 13, 1995 (Field Notes)

Peer: What does that say?
Susie: That says "My angel".
Peer: That "l" is the wrong way.
Susie: OOPS, I can fix that. There.
Peer: Now it looks like mine.
Susie: Yeah.



Susie's dictation of March 13, 1995:

My angel.

Figure 16: Susie's March 13, 1995 Journal Entry.

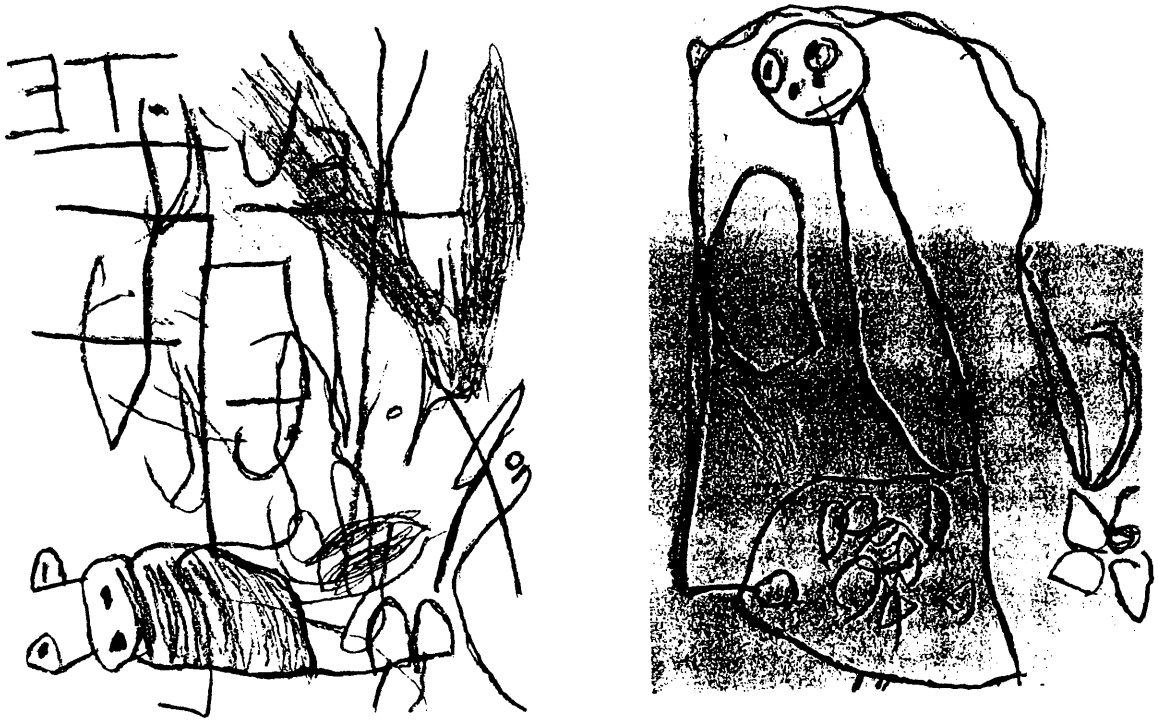
This example illustrates Susie, the middle ability writer, demonstrating that her language was written down and then read to her peers. This example conveys her

idea of writing about an angel. It was classified as a label.

Erika, the low ability writer, had four journal entries/interactions which demonstrated the concept that language can be written down and then read. Figure 17 illustrates an example of this concept.

The Happy Alien
January 3, 1995 (Field Notes)

Erika: Look, I did the date, J3.
Erika: Is it June today?
Peer: It's January.
Erika: Look, I did some J's for January.
Peer: It's upside down to me.
Erika: I can draw an "x".
Peer: Me too.



Erika's dictation of January 3, 1995:

The alien is happy.

Figure 17: Erika's January 3, 1995 Journal Entry.

This example demonstrates that Erika did record a thought about an alien, and the date, and then shared the date with her peers during the journal writing time.

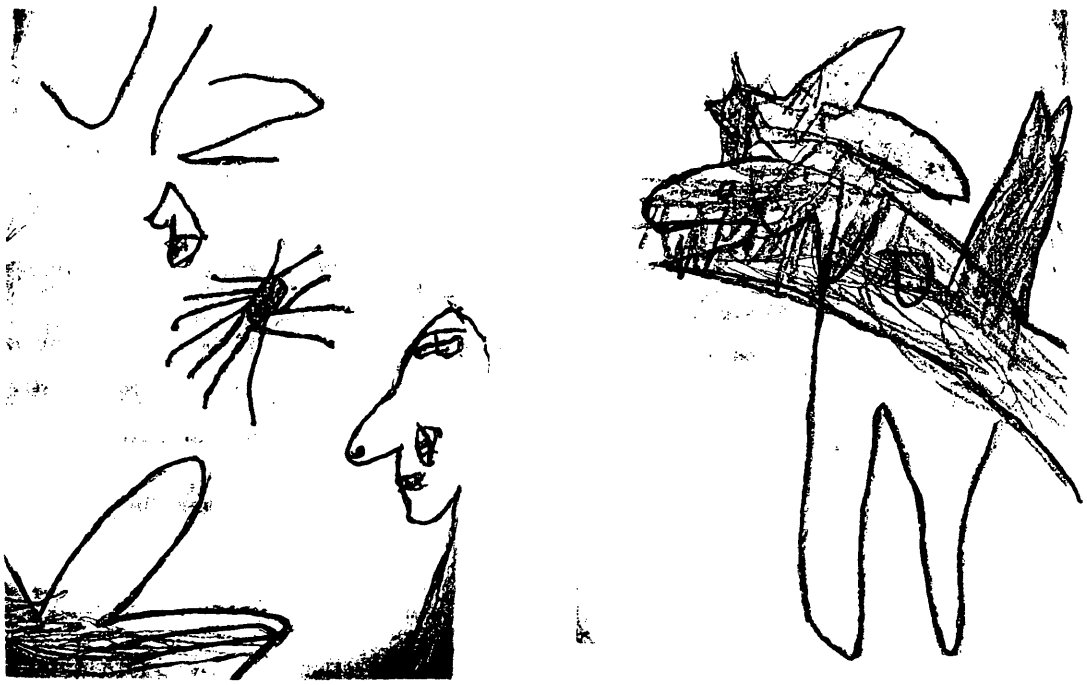
These examples obtained from all three informants, illustrate the concept that language can be written down and then read to peers. The language was recorded as pictures, random letters, scribble writing, or in the form of invented spelling. The journals were all written in one of the three functional forms, in order to convey the informants' ideas.

Additional examples of this concept can be seen in author's chair interactions. There were 14 examples of language being written down and then read by the informants to their peers. Table 4 presents the total number of author's chair sessions for each informant.

Name	Total Number of Sessions
All Three Informants	14
Annie	4
Susie	5
Erika	5

Table 4. Total Number of Author's Chair Sessions for Each Informant.

Annie, the informant representing the high ability writers, had four examples that were shared in author's chair of language being written down and then read to peers. Figure 18 represents this concept.



Annie's explanation of her January 12, 1995 journal entry:

A hammerhead shark with a hammer on his head.

Figure 18: Annie's January 12, 1995 Journal Entry.

This example illustrates Annie sharing her thought regarding a hammerhead shark with the entire class during an author's chair session.

An example involving Susie, the middle ability writer, sharing a thought in an author's chair session can be seen in Figure 19:

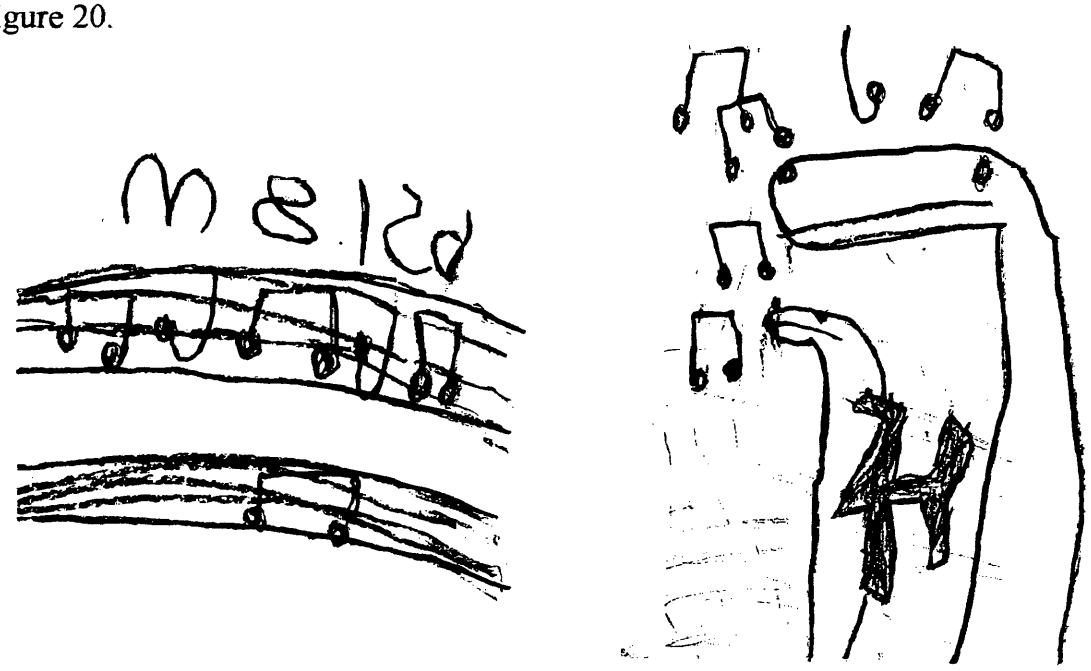
Susie's explanation of her January 26, 1995 journal entry:

The rain watering the flower.

Figure 19: Susie's January 26, 1995 Journal Entry.

Susie's example represents language being shared with peers both orally and graphically. Susie's journal entry was classified as a thought.

Erika shared examples of her language in both oral and graphic forms, in author's chair too. An example of the low ability writer sharing her language can be seen in Figure 20.



Erika's explanation of her February 15, 1995 journal entry:

The dinosaurs heard music from over there.

Figure 20: Erika's February 15, 1995 Journal Entry.

Erika shared her idea about dinosaurs with the entire class during her author's chair session. Erika showed her journal to the class, and then she described her writing.

These examples of journal entries, interactions and author's chair descriptions of what the journal entry was about demonstrate that language can be written down and then shared with peers. All of the informants demonstrated that language can be recorded and then shared regardless of writing level. Peers saw and heard the journals' contents which were shared and conveyed during the journal writing phase and author's chair sessions through a variety of forms of writing.

Author's Chair Sessions

Author's chair sessions provided another source of information used to analyze peer impact on the acquisition of knowledge about print concepts. Results from author's

chair sessions were examined for examples of both print concepts: 1) Writers associating letters with their corresponding sounds, and 2) Writing is meaningful, functional, and represents oral language.

Writers Associating Letters with their Corresponding Sounds

During author's chair sessions, there were not any examples of peers assisting with letter/sound correspondence. However, there were examples of peers noticing writing and making suggestions to include writing in future journal entries.

Annie, Susie, and Erika, noticed whether or not writing was included in the journal entry that was shared in author's chair. Comments such as, "I like your writing" as stated by Susie, or "I like the date" as expressed by Erika, or Annie's statement, "I like your writing. I helped" all demonstrate students' awareness of print. Comments made by peers like the following examples illustrate peers suggesting the addition of letters and word writing in journal entries. Examples of this encouragement are "I would add letters or words to describe your journal entry," or "I would add your words or letters," "I would add your writing," or "He used letters" all portray peer encouragement to write letters or words to describe their writing. Annie too made suggestions of this nature when she stated comments such as, "I would change your scribble writing to letters." These statements occurred throughout the study. They encouraged students to include writing in their journals.

Writing is Meaningful, Functional, and Represents Oral Language

Author's chair sessions always started with the prompt: Tell us about your journal entry. All three of the observed informants and all of the classmates who shared in author's chair explained their entry at the beginning of the session. Descriptions of journal entries such as, "The rain watering the flower" as stated by Susie, or Annie describing her journal entry by saying , "I made two Christmas trees and a sky", or Erika sharing an explanation of her journal entry as, "I drawed a house, and an alien, and a cat" all demonstrate the oral sharing of the journals' content by children with different writing

abilities. These examples depict the three informants sharing their writing with their peers during author's chair with the intent to convey their own ideas, the entry's content, or meaning with the class.

Questions asked during author's chair by the informants and their peers also illustrate this concept. Annie asked questions such as, "What's the brown thing?" and a peer replied, "It is Rudolph." A peer asked the question, "What is the blue thing in the middle?" and the response was "That is rain falling." These examples demonstrate the concept that writing or drawing conveys meaning regardless of the writing level. The informants and their peers wrote and shared their journal entries with the class with the main goal being to share the journal's content with the class. Informants and peers were interested in clarifying the journal's content and understanding the author's content of his/her journal.

Author's chair sessions provided students with the opportunity to share their writing with the class. Since there were no limits set on the types of writing to be shared, a variety of writing forms were shared. The three informants shared examples of writing in the forms of lists, labels, and thoughts. During the sharing sessions, two of the three informants and some peers encouraged each other to write for functional purpose. They did not encourage writing in the forms of lists, but they did encourage each other to add labels and other print concepts to their writing such as the date, or their name. Erika, the informant representing the low ability writers, made note of adding the date when she stated, "I like the date." Susie, the middle ability writer, recognized the importance of page numbers when she commented, "I like the page numbers. I'm going to try that tomorrow." Peers suggested, "Add your name," "I would add a name of your picture," or "I would add the sign 'Pet Shop'." Suggestions and comments like these encouraged writers to write for a functional purpose.

Author's chair also advocated the concept that language can be written down and then read by allowing the authors to orally explain and describe their writing with the

class. Examples from all three informants and their peers demonstrate this concept. Statements such as "I like the way you did scribble writing with your picture," "You did your name," and "I like how you wrote 'February'" demonstrate Susie's reading of written language in journal entries. Annie's statement, "She spelled 'Annie'. Am I in the picture?" demonstrates her print awareness and her reading of other students' work. Other examples, by peers, illustrating this concept are as follows: "What is this? That is where I writed 'Hi'" and "She spelled 'Dad' or 'Mom'". Comments like these demonstrate students reading and questioning the language that was written down in journal entries. These comments occurred throughout the study.

Author's chair provided examples of interactions by both peers and the three informants regarding both of the print concepts. These oral interactions and written examples encouraged the students to experiment with their writing. Through the examples presented of different forms of writing, the thoughts and ideas shared, and the encouragement offered to write words such as labels, names, and dates, peers interacted together during author's chair sessions and the journal writing time to assist with the writing process.

Chapter V

Discussion

Summary of Analyses

To summarize, analyses of written field notes, a written dictation and photocopy of the three informants' daily journal entries, written dictation of shared journal entries during author's chair, audiotapes of author's chair sessions, and written author's chair notes indicated that when actively involved in literacy learning, peers do influence the acquisition of knowledge about print.

Overview of Discussion

The descriptions of the relationships of peers in emergent writers' acquisition of knowledge about print are discussed in this chapter. The information is organized in the following order: 1) Informants' Individual Stories, 2) Comparison of Participants' Stories, 3) Educational Implications of Peers Interacting Together During Journal Writing, 4) Educational Implications of Peers Interacting During Author's Chair, 5) Limitations of the Study, 6) Recommendations for Further Study, and the 7) Conclusion.

Annie's Story

Annie represented the high ability writers in the class. Annie completed a total of 36 journal entries during the study. The majority of Annie's journal entries were written in the form of thoughts as seen in Table 2. The remainder of her entries were classified as either labels or lists which are all functional forms of writing which were used to convey Annie's ideas throughout the study.

Annie drew elaborate pictures with multiple colors and details. Her pictures usually included random letter writing or scribble writing. Annie continued to include some form of writing to go with her pictures in her journal. Annie continued to draw pictures, but her writing included either invented or conventional spelling. She consistently shared her journal entries with her peers during journal writing time, and during her author's chair sessions. As Annie interacted with her peers daily, she

explained her journal entries to her peers. She also asked questions about peers' entries, and asked for help from her peers. While she assisted her peers with their writing, some of her interactions helped with the association of letters with their corresponding sounds. She worked with her peers sharing her language that was written down and then read. Annie always shared her journal entries with the class when it was her turn in author's chair. She also interacted and responded to her peers' journal entries during their author's chair sessions.

Annie's peer interactions throughout the study enhanced both her print knowledge and her peers' print knowledge.

Susie's Story

Susie represented the middle ability writers in the class. She had a total of 40 journal entries during the study. The majority of her journal entries appeared as labels as seen in Figure 12. Her other entries were thoughts or lists. Susie's entries all conveyed her ideas in a variety of written forms.

Susie utilized pictures and some scribble writing or letter-like forms. Susie wrote in her journal with pictures, random letters, and some invented spelling. Susie interacted with her peers daily during the journal writing time and during author's chair sessions. She consistently described and read her journal entries with her peers while she was writing. Susie also shared her journal's content through her daily dictation with me, and via author's chair when it was her turn. She worked with her peers in associating letters with their corresponding sounds in order to write language. Furthermore, she also shared oral interactions with her peers in which her language was written down and then read.

Susie's interactions with her peers enhanced both her print awareness and the print awareness of some of her peers.

Erika's Story

Erika represented the low ability writers in the class. Erika had a total of 37 journal entries that she had written throughout the study. The majority of Erika's journal

entries were written in the form of thoughts. This can be seen in Figure 12. Erika's other entries were classified as either lists or labels which are both functional forms of writing in which Erika utilized to convey her ideas.

Erika wrote her journal entries as solitary pictures, pictures with scribble writing, or pictures with random letters. Occasionally, during the journal writing time, Erika shared her entries with her peers, but usually Erika chose to work quietly without peer interaction. Erika did have one recorded interaction with a peer in which letters were associated with their corresponding sounds. This was during the journal writing time. When it was her turn in author's chair, Erika consistently shared her journal entries with her peers. Occasionally, she shared her thoughts and questions regarding her peers' entries during the author's chair sessions. Moreover, Erika shared and listened to oral language that was written down and then read in author's chair sessions.

Erika's peer interactions throughout the study enhanced both her print knowledge and her peers' print knowledge.

Comparison of Participants' Stories

The three informants, Susie, Annie, and Erika are unique individuals whose interactions with their peers helped develop print awareness. The interactions occurred through social discussions in which the informants discussed thoughts, ideas, and concepts that revealed print knowledge. The print knowledge was evident in journal samples written by all three of the informants. Additionally, evidence of print knowledge emerged through the dialogue that occurred during journal writing and author's chair. The examples of journal entries and dialogue examples regarding print concepts illustrate the point that peers do affect or influence the acquisition of knowledge about print.

The first print concept that was examined in this study was writers associating letters with their corresponding sounds. Annie, the high ability writer, and Susie, the middle ability writer, both had multiple examples of peer interactions involving letter-sound correspondence with the outcome being invented or conventional spelling utilized

in journal entries. This data demonstrated the idea that peers, when given the opportunity to converse and work together during journal writing, assisted and supported each other in the writing process of associating letters with their corresponding sounds.

Erika, the low ability writer, had only one example of peer interaction that resulted in the association of letters with their corresponding sounds. Erika did not show conclusive evidence of this kind of interaction with her peers, but she may have developed this kind of interaction when the writing of letters and words in her entries became a consistent part of her journal writing. At the end of the study, Erika included scribble writing and random letters in her journal entries. Comments from peers during author's chair sessions and journal writing emphasized the need and importance to include some sort of writing along with pictures in journals. This information may have helped Erika at a later writing stage.

Calkins (1986) research findings also encouraged collaboration as a tool to assist students with spelling, writing, and as a means to offer support to peers. All students can benefit from peer collaboration.

Writing which conveys meaning, is functional, and represents oral language was the second print concept examined in this study. All three of the informants consistently wrote in their journals with the completed journal entries being an instrument to convey their intended idea or meaning. It did not make a difference what form of writing was used in the journal. Some examples were solitary pictures, and other examples contained random letters, scribble writing, invented and or conventional spelling along with a picture. Since the three informants had varied writing abilities, a conclusion can be reached that regardless of one's writing ability, meaning can be conveyed in journals at all stages of writing development. Research by Calkins (1986) also reinforces this point that children's written marks have the capacity to convey meaning" (p. 38). All students can write to convey meaning, no matter what their writing level might be.

All three of the informants wrote journal entries that were categorized as either lists, labels, or thoughts. These categories all represent a functional form of writing. The data presented in chapter four provided conclusive evidence that all children in spite of differing writing abilities are capable of writing for a functional purpose. Routman's (1991) exploration of the writing process reinforced these findings when she states that "our focus must be on writing for real purposes" (p. 170). Writing must be authentic and relevant to the writer. Consequently, when writing has a purpose and is relevant to the writer, children are capable of writing to fulfill their functional purposes.

Examples obtained during author's chair and journal writing from all three informants provided conclusive evidence that children can record their language on paper and then can share their language if given the opportunity to do so in class. The three informants all had information to share which was evident in the dialogue that occurred during journal writing and from the description of journal entries given during author's chair. Daily descriptions of their journal entries also provided examples of oral language being recorded and then shared. These examples emphasize the point that regardless of a students' writing level, all of the informants shared their oral language that was recorded in their journals.

Morrow (1993) shared similar findings when she described children's writing as the transformation of spoken words into written language. These results when combined, further the understanding that written language is related to oral language and that oral language can be recorded.

These findings regarding three kindergarten students with different writing abilities provided evidence that when given the opportunity to interact with their peers, kindergartners do influence print acquisition.

Educational Implications of Peers Interacting Together During Journal Writing

Since writing is a means of recording and communicating, then journal writing is a useful tool to get students involved in writing to express their own ideas. When

students express their thoughts and ideas among a community of learners, they build and develop relationships with their peers, and they create a social context in which learning can occur.

The journal writing that occurred during this study involved peer interactions which were productive and beneficial to the writers as well as their peers. It was productive in the sense that informants were writing to convey meaning, they were writing for functional purposes, and they were recording their oral language in written form. It was also beneficial that through verbal interactions between the peers, letter-sound correspondence occurred, ideas were shared and encouraged, and peers supported each other emphasizing the importance of writing and sharing writing.

Journal writing provided an outlet for students to write and express themselves, and it provided students with a forum to share and learn as seen from the data presented in this study.

The results from the informants' case studies endorsed the idea that the teacher in the classroom plans activities to implement the curriculum, but does not have to be solely responsible for all of the teaching of the curriculum goals. Teaching in a classroom can be a joint effort by the teacher, the student and the student's peers. Helping children realize this concept and providing activities that will allow children to teach each other is part of the teacher's responsibility in meeting students' needs. One way this can be achieved is by incorporating journal writing into the school day. The journal writing should include opportunities for peers to interact during the journal writing. If children are encouraged to write daily in journals and are allowed to talk with their peers during and after the journal writing, then knowledge about print and writing development can be reinforced and taught by peers. Since peers assisted each other with the acquisition of print knowledge in this study, one could endorse the idea that peers can develop and reinforce other print concepts that were not evaluated in this study. Peers can help with writing development by modeling and cooperatively working together. As illustrated in

this study, peers do have much to offer. Teachers need to allow them to interact more in the classroom. Peers can transfer and share information that teaches (Moffett, 1968).

Educational Implications of Peers Interacting Together During Author's Chair

Author's chair provided a social setting in a classroom where children interacted with each other about literacy. It created a learning situation in which interactions occurred among, and by peers which developed and enhanced literacy.

Author's chair was an integral part of our journaling process in class. It directed the children by giving them a purpose for writing. Author's chair also made the children aware of the importance of writing for an audience. In author's chair, the students were encouraged to share their thoughts, ideas, and opinions. No ideas were ever rejected or criticized. It was a positive learning experience for all of the students involved in the class.

The author's chair sessions that occurred in our class encouraged thinking and discussions about text and knowledge about text. Children were encouraged to question each other during author's chair to clarify meaning or any uncertainty. Questions were also used to direct the journal sharing. The children took turns asking and answering questions. The children had much to offer each other in author's chair.

The author's chair should be an integral part of a literacy classroom, since students have so much to teach and share with each other. Graves and Hansen (1983) describe the benefits of author's chair as both a source of immediate feedback and as a writing model for children to view and form opinions. The data from this study reinforces this point. Classrooms need to be set up as interactive environments where children are allowed and encouraged to work with each other. Furthermore, the children should also be encouraged to teach each other what they know. Children are a valuable resource in the classroom. A teacher should utilize all available resources in a classroom and therefore, should allow peers to teach print concepts and other aspects of the curriculum.

Limitations of the Study

One factor limiting this study is the researcher's interpretations of the findings. Qualitative research dictates descriptive data to be shared and interpreted by the researcher. Because of this source of data and interpretation, the results may reflect the researcher's opinions and biases which may affect the outcomes.

A second factor that may have limited the results of this study occurred during part of the data collection. Written field notes were recorded for two minutes each day for each of the three informants. I started with a different informant each day, but was able to listen and record field notes for only one informant at a time. This was a limitation as I was unable to attend to all three of the informants' interactions simultaneously.

Recommendations for Further Study

Although this study regarding the influence of peers on the acquisition of print knowledge provides educators and researchers with valuable data which endorses the utilization of peers as both teachers and as a tool of learning, additional studies should be conducted to further our knowledge on the benefits of peer interactions. Studies that will examine other elements of writing or the writing of older students would provide additional information on the benefits of peer interactions. Possibly, a longitudinal study that focuses on students from kindergarten through sixth grade would also benefit educators greatly. I feel this research has great potential and could enrich educators immensely regarding the benefits of peer interactions in a classroom.

Conclusion

Peers are an asset in a classroom. They have much to offer to their classmates. It does not matter what skill level or developmental ability one possesses, he/she still can encourage or teach another person what he/she knows. A child can and should see himself/herself as both a learner and a teacher.

As a result of my research in a kindergarten classroom, I have gained knowledge about a learning tool that is readily available in a classroom. As long as the classroom encourages children to interact during literacy learning, children can teach each other and reinforce print concepts. Children can benefit from each other's teaching as shown in this study. They can experiment with their peers' new ideas and knowledge, model and share their own ideas and knowledge, and provide natural feedback regarding literacy.

Literacy learning is an important aspect of education. It is a social process of communication through reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Peers are an important aspect of interaction and the social nature of literacy.

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Appendix A

Description of Kindergarten Reading Curriculum: Introduction of Concepts

September
- Relates speech and pictures to print
- Directionality of print
- Book handling and book concepts
- Word boundaries
- Reads own name
- Means of writing: scribbles, drawings, invented spelling
- Asking questions

October
- Distinguish between capital and lowercase letters
- Writing name
- Recording information
- Recognize environmental print and letter names
- Visual discrimination capital and lowercase letters
- Phonemic awareness: sounds and segments
- Phonic analysis /d/ d and /m/ m

November
- Match capital and lowercase letters and words
- Phonic analysis /b/ b, /f/ f, /p/ p and /s/ s

December
- Phonic analysis /l/ l and /t/ t

January
- Phonic analysis /k/ c and /z/ z

February
- Phonic analysis /k/ k and /r/ r

March
- Phonic Analysis /g/ g, /j/ j and /n/ n

April
- Recognize punctuation
- Recognize sentences
- Phonic analysis /h/ h and /v/ v

May
- Phonic analysis /w/ w and /y/ y

Appendix B

Author's Chair

Date: _____

Name: _____

Tell us about your journal entry:

What is your favorite part?

What questions do you have about ?'s journal entry?

Tell ? what you like about his/her journal entry:

What would you add to ?'s journal entry?

What would you change?

Comments: